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# I D O N I A

*AND OTHER POEMS.*

BY

JAMES BURNLEY.

“FOR I HAVE LONG TIME BEEN MY FANCY FEEDING  
WITH HOPES THAT ONE DAY YOU WOULD THINK THE READING  
OF MY ROUGH VERSES NOT AN HOUR MIS-SPENT.”

*Keats.*



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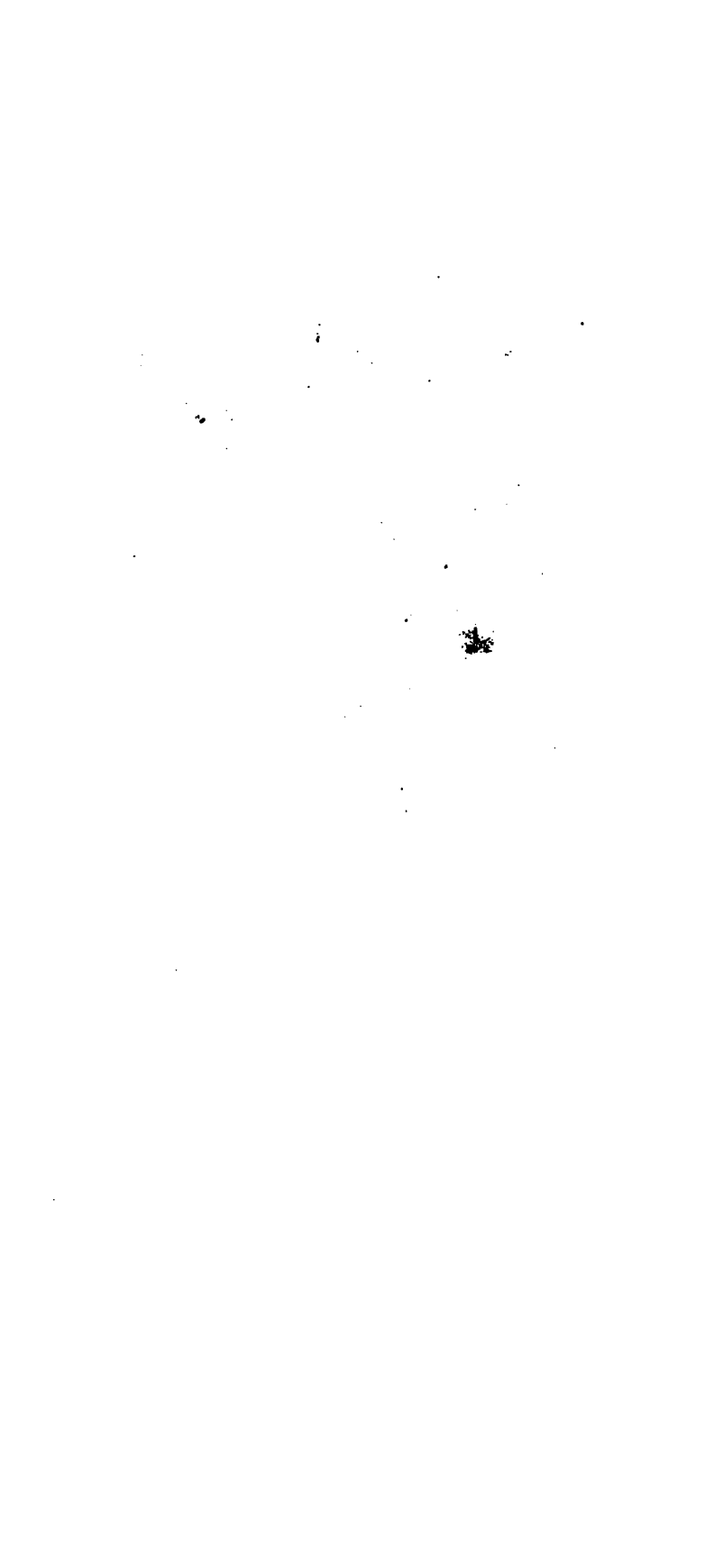
**M. NELSON, PRINTER, EXCHANGE SQUARE, BRADFORD.**

TO  
J. ARTHUR BINNS.

MUCH OF WHAT LITERARY TRAINING I HAVE HAD  
IS DUE TO YOUR GUIDANCE.  
I BRING TO YOU, THEREFORE, THIS  
MY FIRST BOOK,  
AS THE BEST TOKEN I CAN OFFER,  
OF MY APPRECIATION OF YOUR CLEAR  
CRITICAL JUDGMENT & WIDE LITERARY KNOWLEDGE,  
AND  
AS AN EARNEST OF HIGHER EFFORTS,  
TOWARDS WHICH YOU HAVE EVER TAUGHT ME  
TO ASPIRE.

J. B.





I have written the verses in this volume because the impulse to write was strong upon me. It is not for me to say whether they are poetry, but I know ~~that~~ they are the outcome of sympathy with poetic thought. There are lofty heights on which sit crowned the poets of all time: there are lowlier eminences whereon humbler singers have their place. It is sufficient for me if anywhere among them, even at the very foot of the hill, my claim to the glorious fellowship be granted. The honour may be more than I merit; it is certainly all that I seek.

J. B.



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# IDONIA.

## PART I.

---

PENROSE COURT.

BASIL *and* IDONIA.

BASIL.

HERE, love, beneath this canopy of leaves,  
Our faces set to catch the dying sun's  
Last smile, we'll browse in fields of high romance,  
Untrammelled by the fear of crafty eyes ;  
*And should'st thou ask for greater light, my soul,*

Love-primed, shall be a sun to thee. Dear love !  
This new-born freedom makes thee doubly dear,  
And me as doubly bold. But yesterday,  
We lived a tyrant's slaves, both tyrant and  
The yoke we wore unseen, unknown of all  
The world save us ; and Love, the tyrant, holds  
Us still ; but, now that we are free to bear  
Our love stamped clear upon our brows, confessed  
To every gaze, his iron chains are changed  
To silk, and we can roam unchallenged through  
His rich domain.

## IDONIA.

I scarce dare trust my soul  
With so much brightness in a day, lest it  
Do perish in the sudden glare. Let me  
Rather, resting my head upon thy breast,  
Curtain my eyes, and feel thy breath float with  
The dreamy twilight, like a wandering sleep,  
*Around my head ; the while I hold my heart*

A harp Æolian, for thy voice, as some  
Soft sighing wind, to play upon.

BASIL.

So rest

Thee then, disrobed of all dissembling and  
Cold secrecy, until thy heart absorbs  
Itself in love's completion.

IDONIA.

Thither lead

Me then by full recital how thyself  
Did'st win that happy goal ; how thou did'st storm  
The fortress of my father's will.

BASIL.

Then, listen—

But how is this ! Thy forehead throbs against  
My hand like pulsing pain.



## IDONIA.

Dost thou not know  
Joy has its throes, as well as grief? Go on,  
Dear heart ; my soul is giddy.

## BASIL.

Thou shalt have  
The action brief compressed in words, tame words.  
Hither I came, thou know'st, thy father's guest,  
Meant to bridge o'er a gap of many years'  
Estrangement 'twixt my sire and him ; and in  
Accomplishing that worthy end, I formed  
A tie more strong than that I'd come to bind.  
Thou knowest, too,—but no ; thou can'st not know,  
Since 'tis scarce known to me,—by what strange rapture  
My soul got firmly link'd with thine : and how,  
In sweet unconsciousness I track'd it to  
Its ecstasy ; how that, love spurred, I gave  
*Its secret unto thee, to spurn or shield*

As thou should'st will ; and thou, letting thine eyes  
Translate the language of thine heart, did'st tell,  
With lips all mute, that thy pure spirit too  
Was lost in like entanglement. What time  
We nursed our hopes apart, meeting by stealth  
To work conspiracy which should dethrone  
That grim, imagined foe, thy father's will,  
And set Love's kingdom up, thou knowest too.

## IDONIA.

I do ; and how, at last, we turned our minds  
To wise diplomacy, resolved to sue  
For what we first inclined to seize unask'd.

## BASIL.

Glad after-thought that op'd the door to bliss !  
But to my action's pith. An hour ago  
I sought thy father in his room, and brought  
My heart, by slow degrees, full level with  
*His eyes ; breaking the terror of surprise*

By backing it with views of fortune, rank,  
And friendship,—all of which I claimed as mine,—  
Until some one of them, or haply, all,  
O'erclouded his reluctance, and, with slow  
Consent, he set thy heart before me, as  
A crown, to win and wear for ever, should  
A year's probation find our love unchanged.

IDONIA.

Unchanged ! To hint of change gives insult to  
Our passion. O but truth can never change !

BASIL.

Tomorrow I return to take my place  
Amongst the world, but shall take with me, dear,  
The radiance of thine eyes, the sacred print  
Of thy warm lips, all through the rose-strewn year.  
A year ! what varied measure does that word  
Express ! To grief 'tis weary minutes, while  
To joy 'tis but a lengthened day. To joy  
Then let our year be given.

*Idonia.*

7

IDONIA.

To joy and love !

BASIL.

Here, take this ring as voucher of my truth.

IDONIA.

And thou this rose as pledge of mine. Now life  
Becomes a poem, and the finite widens  
Into the infinite : the storm-hued world  
Itself is roseate with love's glow. These long  
Weird walls, these zig-zag terraces, these trees,  
These flashing water sheets, before were wrapt  
In gloom, but now love's magic touch gives bright  
Enchantment to them all.

BASIL.

In which our lives  
*Shall pass unto the end.* The sun is down.

Come, sweetest, let us walk to meet the moon,  
Our nightly confidant, that it may learn  
Our high attainment ; and, that it may gild,  
While we with Love's soft pencil boldly trace  
Our pathway o'er the chaos of the years  
To come.

## IDONIA.

Thoughts stand too thick upon my brain  
For safe assortment into words : O give  
To me the luxury of listening !

## PART II.

---

*Three Months later.*

PENROSE COURT.

*Idonia's Room.*

PHŒBE.

My mistress is in love. In love, forsooth !  
Methinks these high-born maidens wear their love  
In lowly way. Love brings a change, I know,  
But surely 't should not be such change as this  
That's come upon my lady. No. She's sad,  
*Holds readier ear to grief, is humbler too*

Than was her wont of old ; while I, poor I,  
So differently the passion acts on apt  
Experience, put on a merrier mood,  
As most befitting love. She mopes, makes eyes  
Unto the moon, stares blankly out o' window,  
And starts with hand to heart and cry of "What  
Is that?" at common sounds. Her reading, too,  
Has run amuck on poetry,—the stuff  
Which sleek-haired men do write in dreams ; and then  
She plays such melancholy strains, and sings  
So plaintively of hearts forsaken, and  
Of loves untold, one needs must whine, or stop  
One's ears, 'tis so contagious. She comes,—

*Enter IDONIA.*

Good day, my lady.

IDONIA.

So to you. I wait

The morning's letters, Phœbe ; wilt thou meet  
*Them, urging greater speed unto their bearer.*

*Idonia.*

11

PHOEBE.

I will, my lady.

*Exit.*

IDONIA.

*(Seating herself at a window overlooking the Park)*

O ! this late remiss

In Basil's usage, these short letters sent  
At widening intervals, play havoc with  
My trusting heart ; and now, an unknown fear  
Sits brooding on my soul, like spectre herald  
Of some advancing woe. Each wind-stirred branch,  
Light pebble's fall, slight shudd'ring window, door  
That creaketh low, or waft of distant voice,  
Sounds as a warning of some hidden foe,  
And strikes like sudden sword-thrust at my heart.  
'Twas summer's noontide when he left, but now,  
The moulting woods stand shiv'ring midst leaves sere  
And dead ; while Autumn holds the helm of Time  
*And guides us through the twilight of the year.*



*Enter PHOEBE, with a Letter.*

A letter ! Joy at last ! Now fly, O fly !  
Ye hateful fears, whose ghastly forms have perched  
And riot held in all my heart's emotion'd  
Chambers ; fly, fly ! (*seizes letter*) I break this seal, and  
by

The self-same act unseal my prisoned soul  
To frëer breath. (*Reads*) What trick, what mockery  
Is this ? O Basil ! Love's pure stage employs  
No clown to cheat tired laughter of his rest ;  
And this light freak, this clownish part of thine,  
Is an assumption that befits thee not,  
Nor pricks me e'en to smile. But that I know  
Thee well, I might misjudge thee for't. (*Reads again.*)

But stay !

Great God ! these words have import stronger than  
The hollowness of jest. Go, Phoebe, go !  
My soul sets out upon a quest where none  
*Must dog its steps.*

PHŒBE.

*(Aside)* Six lovers have been mine

In half that count of years, but never one,  
No, not the maddest of them all, could stir  
Such frenzy in my blood as this.

*Exit.*

IDONIA.

*(Follows Phæbe to the door, locks it, then reads the  
letter again.)*

Be firm,

Poor heart, be firm ! O Reason ! strange to love  
As swallow to the silent snow, do thou  
Possess mine eyes ere they go blind, surveying  
This yawning chasm of despair ! A mist  
Coils round me, and, from out the gulf, arise  
Dark, frowning forms that claim a sisterhood  
To me. Their names are Jealousy, and black  
Revenge. Down ! down ! The *words* are false, not *him* ;  
*God could not let me live, and him be false.*

May not my swift-paced eyes have bounded o'er  
Some word whose welcome weight may yet adjust  
The balance of them all? Hope whispers that  
It must be so. (*Reads again.*) "*Better had we ne'er  
met.*"

No word missed there.—"*We'll think our love a dream.*"  
Nor there.—"*My father's enmity breaks forth  
Afresh, and honour bids me free thee from  
A hasty bond.*"—Nor there : No, no ! "*I plunge  
Into the world's wide sea : do thou the same,  
And so forget.*" Forget ! And thinkest thou  
To patch this riven soul with words like these ?  
Is woman but a wayside flow'r, to pluck  
And cast aside like this ? (*kneels*) O God ! *just* God !—  
For my young faith hath taught me thou art just,—  
Give justice here. Here ! Now ! on earth ; while yet  
His spirit lingers in the body's mould.  
Let not thy vengeance wait till Death doth make  
Them twain. Smite now ; and O ! commission me  
*Thy minister.* Assess these burning wrongs,

And by them guage their ample punishment !  
Thou knowest what I gave. I gave him faith,  
And constancy that's born of faith. I gave  
Him all ; body and soul ; and beauty with  
The rest,—beauty, my dower from thee. (*Rises*) O heart !  
Poor beggared heart ! forsaken, wounded, spurned !  
Thy bleeding wounds shall never close their mouths,  
But cry aloud, till sated vengeance heals  
Them with her balm. Love must be buried here ;  
And with it woman's birthright, gentleness.  
Sweet, murdered love ! I plant my foot beside  
Thy corpse, and swear to hunt thy murderer down.  
And there shall ever float o'er Mem'ry's sky  
A little cloud that bears thy epitaph  
Upon its silver crest. That little cloud  
Shall be the vanguard of my sure revenge !

PART III.

---

*A few Months later.*

THE REGENCY CLUB, LONDON.

LORD FITZTOMMAS *and* SIR CUTHBERT CRANSTOUN.

SIR CUTHBERT,

*(Offering cigar case.)*

Cigar, my lord?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

Well, yes, Sir Cuthbert. Thanks.

SIR CUTHBERT.

What news is there ?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

The newest, oldest news  
Of all : Death's slaughter list to read.

SIR CUTHBERT.

I've scanned  
The morning's "Times," but noted naught beyond  
The usual column's file of nobodies.  
Have you more recent news ?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

I have ; news which  
To-morrow's leader type will lengthen out,  
News which now flashes o'er the whole land's length.

SIR CUTHBERT.

What *is't, my lord?*

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

That General Brand is dead !  
He died at his retreat at Penrose Court  
Last night.

SIR CUTHBERT.

Poor Brand ! Another off the roll  
Of heroes, and one less to keep the day  
Of carnage up at Apsley House. He leaves  
Some family ?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

A daughter, that is all.

SIR CUTHBERT.

Much wealth ?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

Just fortune for his girl. Look there !

You see that carriage trundling by, begirt  
With liveried excrescences.

SIR CUTHBERT.

Yes ; that's  
The new Home Sec.'s fresh blazon'd equipage ;  
Proud Basil Blount's ; the Tories' forlorn hope,  
Their last discovered star ; the newest spoke  
In all the broad-flanged wheel of Government.  
He's late returned from Italy—the old  
Dream-world—where, with his new-fledged bride, the rich  
Young Yorkshire heiress, he's been honey-mooning.

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

'Tis well for him poor Brand lies dead.

SIR CUTHBERT.

How so ?

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

*Because he'd wrongs to answer for to him,*



Which, though man's studied law provides not for,  
Yet, tried by honour's higher code, demand  
A forfeiture of blood.

SIR CUTHBERT.

Explain, my lord.

LORD FITZTOMMAS.

You know, Blount's father and the General were  
Fast friends,—except one time of long estrangement—  
And Basil, sojourning at Penrose but  
A year ago, cast eyes on Brand's fair daughter ;  
Waylaid her girlish innocence, entrapped  
Her untried heart ; strewing the house with oaths  
And protestations—mere heart's froth, but which  
Passed current to her ignorant eyes, as pure  
Unsullied tokens of a life-long love.  
Then, having wrung a hesitating "Yes"  
From him that's dead, and robbed the girl of all  
*Her heart's rich first-fruits*, came to town, and while

Her soul was yet a-tremble with the hope  
Born of his promises, he takes to wife  
This heiress whom you name. So, it is well,  
I say, poor Brand lies dead. But see, here come  
Some members from the House, hot from division.

PART IV.

---

*A Year later.*

LIBRARY IN BASIL BLOUNT'S LONDON MANSION.

BASIL.

*(Looking at a packet of letters.)*

These sad memorials of a tender past,  
Rejected sureties of a sweeter flow  
Of peacefulness than these luxuriant halls,  
And all my bride's fair dower of wealth, and gift  
Of love, can yield me now, must perish ; ay,  
*Must pass to nothingness.* They meet my eyes

Like weird accusers of unpardoned wrongs ;  
While the fair hand which did transcribe them from  
The heart's clear, open page ; the supple form,  
Alive with beauty's every grace ; and, ah !  
The eyes, the soul-ting'd eyes ! o'erburden'd with  
The tearful eloquence of soft reproach ;  
In seeming tangibility of life  
Before me rise ; and all the empty air  
Is troubled with the sadness of her voice.

[*Pauses—then suddenly resumes,*]

But this is childishness ! There, burn !

[*Puts letters into the fire.*]

A flame

Like flash of pain ; a puff of smoke that sends  
A ghastly clamminess athwart my soul,  
And they are gone. O ! could I thus burn up  
The larger store of words, and looks, and vows  
Which Mem'ry holds within ! To day, the past  
Seems magnified, and all its sin and wrong  
Wear blacker hue ! when faced with it, I start,

Blush, or cry out, as if to scare my thoughts  
From resting there ; while quickened conscience turns  
And whispers “villain” in my ear. Yet ’twas  
But yesterday my mind could grasp the view,  
Nor guilt-like wince and shrink aside, as now ;  
But calmly coin defence and glib excuse  
To choke each plaint which busy Mem’ry made.  
Those letters, which Duty, my spirit’s last  
Acquired mate, did urge me to destroy,  
Have wrought this change ; but now the sight of them  
Can vex my soul no more, and quiet must  
Return. I loved Idonia, ’tis true ;  
More true, that I am wedded unto one  
Whom I love less, but who gives me as pure  
A passion as e’er filled the other’s heart.  
That—if, indeed, the world afforded one  
A recompense for love—were recompense  
Enough for what I’ve lost. Lost, did I say ?  
Yes ; but the gain ? I gained all else I longed  
*For,—power, wealth, and station ; for, since proud*

Ambition ruled the strongest in my breast,  
The weaker passion was its stepping stone.  
Idonia offered love, and only love ;  
And, for a while, that boyish passion swamped  
All other yearnings and desires ; but when,  
With manhood's dawn, there came ambition, then  
Love seemed no more the "all" of life. And then  
Came Avice, offering equal love, and with  
It, ample dole of wealth. Ambition chose,  
And Avice,—whom kind Heaven keep far aloof  
From this one shadow of my past—is now  
My wife. 'Tis better so. If lovers, and  
Love's reign, were undisturbed, life would not yield  
True greatness, for, attaining love, man would  
Not wish for more, but spend his dreamy days  
In useless, dull content.

*Enter AVICE, in tears, a letter in her hand.*

Avice ! O ! why

Are you in tears ? What direful thing has brought

*This primal taint upon our wedded life ?*

I deemed our happiness was all intact,  
And proof against the outward press of grief.  
Avice ! look at me ! stand out from your tears.  
What grief can come to us that shall not merge  
In the vast fulness of our love ?

AVICE.

O Basil !

I thought you mine ; all mine ! I thought your gift  
Of love co-eval with and deep as mine.  
O whence, and wherefore, comes this letter here  
To give disfigurement unto my soul's  
Ideal ?

BASIL.

What letter, love ? Quick, let me see  
What 'tis that prompts your tongue to speech like this.

*[Takes letter from AVICE, as she sinks weeping into  
a chair.]*

*Great heaven ! what devil's play is this ? 'Tis mine !*

A letter writ long since to Idonia !  
How came it here ? Speak, Avice !

AVICE.

I but know  
'Tis yours, and, knowing that, can never know  
Myself again.

BASIL.

I will explain.

AVICE.

You have  
Explained ; there needs no explanation more  
Than that you've written there.

BASIL.

Where got you this ?

AVICE.

*I found it on the lawn, and, seeing 'twas*



Your hand, and that it spoke of love, I deemed  
It could be only mine ; and so, I read,  
Until my eyes could see no more. O Basil !  
The heart is never given twice ; when once  
Bestowed, 'tis gone for ever ; neither can  
It be distributed in parts.

BASIL.

You wrong

My manhood by thus charging it with acts  
That only boyhood ought to answer for—  
If really boyhood's follies can be deemed  
Of import deep enough for serious charge.  
Be comforted ! and let this letter slip  
Into the grave of those long buried years  
Whence it had birth. Whatever folly did  
Beset my life in its drear upward slope  
To you, is gone for ever ; weep not then  
O'er this old-life waif that has washed across  
*Our happiness to day.* Lift up your eyes.

## AVICE.

The terror of their waking is too keen ;  
For now I know you not. You had my life  
Story complete, O why did you withhold  
Me aught of yours ?

## BASIL.

Because I would have had  
Your life free from all taint that could have clung  
To me in those sad years while yet I knew  
You not ; because I would have held aside  
The shadow of those early years far from  
Your path. Thus, I forbore to clog your brain  
With thoughts whose presence might create and nurse  
Disquiet ; thoughts which, while to you unknown,  
Could fling no pain upon your innocence.  
Yet, had I deemed one shred of this dead life  
Could thus have wandered here, my lips alone  
Should have possessed you of its rueful tale :  
*'Twas love alone that kept the tale untold.*

AVICE.

Was it not love that moved your hand to write ?

BASIL.

No, Avice ! you do misconstrue this freak  
Of passion that my manhood did disrobe  
Me of. (*Aside*) O what a coil is this I've wound  
About myself ! Deception's path leads on,  
But never back—there's no retreat when once  
We've bid farewell to truth, we must for ever  
On to a lower deep. Truth unmasked now  
Were death. (*Aloud*) O think this letter unbeheld,  
And let us look not elsewhere than on  
The time since our two ways converged in one.

AVICE.

Time's whitened hand itself can not efface  
Those written words of yours, which now, alas !  
Mine eyes have burned into my memory.

Such words were those you breathed on me ; words which  
My tremulous heart caught up and treasured more  
Than ever miser treasured up his gold,  
Ay, and more oft recurred to, feasted on,  
And felt ; words which this letter whispers now  
Were dim reflections or weak echoes of  
Those earlier words whereto it testifies.  
That night when, midst the autumn solemnness,  
My lips met yours in their first yielded kiss  
To man ; I wondered if you e'er had bent  
Thus fondly to another ; if your voice  
Had e'er made modulations sweet as those  
I listened to, to ears before ; I strove  
To read within your face, as 't beamed athwart  
The moonlight, some true answering sign, but it  
Shone clear and open as the blue above  
The fretted trees ; so I had faith, so I  
Believed I read aright. How oft I've lived,  
That evening o'er and o'er ; for thitherward  
My soul for ever turned, as turns a flower

Unto the life-germed sun. O that so fair  
An aspect should be blasted thus ! Had care  
Or sorrow, sickness, poverty combined  
To drag me down, I ne'er had fallen so low  
As this.

BASIL.

Your mind, dear Avicc, is now all  
Distorted with surprise, and sees no hue  
But blackness. Turn your eyes away a space,  
While I possess you of the view unflecked  
By these grief-boding fancies : while I prove  
That Love to me did ne'er unveil her brows  
Till thereto tempted by your loveliness.

AVICE.

'Tis useless now : my 'wildered brain rejects  
The sense of words ; O let me hide within  
My chamber's solitude.

*Exit.*

BASIL.

What unseen hand

Is this, which, darting from the past, hath struck

This deadly blow? Just as I thought myself

Sure proof against all touch of ill that past

Could send. Injured Idonia! could'st thou see

What chastisement hath thus crept in upon

This later life my soul did purchase by

Forsaking thee, thou would'st forgive! This letter,

Ablaze with passion, writ when in my first

Love's too bright dawn, is now its own avenger.

Its coming is inscrutable; and yet

Design, not accident, hath winged it here.

Idonia is too gentle for revenge

Or I might charge her hand with this. Perhaps

Some coward kinsman hath possessed himself

Of it, and having dearth of courage for

The sword, but more of stealth, hath planned it here

Like some explosive, deadly shell, which hurls

Black ruin o'er the hand that touches it.  
My statesman's craft shall work this problem out  
Another time ; now, all my senses must  
Be centred on the restoration to  
Poor Avicé of her tranquil memories.  
O what a task ! Methinks, at best, 'twere but  
Like trying to patch up with lies the rent  
Which truth hath made within her clear-paged heart.

## PART V.

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*Half a year later.*

MOSSTOWN CHURCHYARD.

*A funeral procession entering the Churchyard. A large  
number of people assembled.*

FIRST BYSTANDER.

O ! what a corpse-cold waft ebbs through the air !  
Death almost seems to brush one's cheek : and all  
One's soul's astir, as if 'twere beckoned hence,  
And knew not where to turn ; and then, that bell !  
That awe-toned bell ! its muffled deadness clogs  
One's heart till it vibrates with heaviness.

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## SECOND BYSTANDER.

Ah ! 'tis a solemn sight ! See what a string  
Of steady blackness all these coaches make.

## FIRST BYSTANDER.

How slow they move ! The very horses seem  
Afraid to tread lest they should wake up Death  
Again !

## THIRD BYSTANDER.

Stand back a pace, my friends, they're here.

## FIRST BYSTANDER.

There goes the hearse with its cold freight.

## SECOND BYSTANDER.

And there,  
I' the first coach, sits the Honourable Basil,  
The new made widower.

•  
THIRD BYSTANDER.

That office comes  
From higher donor than the Minister  
Who perched him on the pedestal of power.

FIRST BYSTANDER.

And he'd not found his way up there, but for  
The brightness of yon dead wife's wealth.

FOURTH BYSTANDER.

What mean  
So many empty coaches, friend ?

FIRST BYSTANDER.

Ah ; though  
They're empty they do carry grief as much  
As most of those full-weighted loads of close  
Handkerchief'd eyes that go before. They're sent  
To shew their owners' reverence for the dead ;

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And shew it by their emptiness. Dost read  
The symbol?

## FOURTH BYSTANDER.

Ay ; full well.

## FIRST BYSTANDER.

That coach is the  
Prime minister's, and that, methinks, doth bear  
The arms of Lord Fitztommas. See, they leave  
The carriages ; let's press up to the porchway.

## SECOND BYSTANDER.

There's Basil Blount, his mother on his arm.  
Mark how he weeps : did you not hear that sob?

## FIRST BYSTANDER.

Ah ; grave-side tears are common, and small test  
Of love. Within the shadow of the grave,  
E'en strangers to the dead find tears.

THIRD BYSTANDER.

Now come

The white-robed choristers : the Dean too : now  
The organ sends deep shudders through the church,  
And, two by two, the low bent heads glide slow  
Into its high-arched solemnness.

FIRST BYSTANDER.

How frail,

How fragile seems an earth life after this !

SECOND BYSTANDER.

One burial breathes forth more eloquence  
On life and immortality, than all  
The Sunday sermons of a year.

THIRD BYSTANDER.

There go

The servitors, the last of all ; and now  
The doors meet close, and we can see no more.

## FIRST BYSTANDER.

Yet we may hear. Hark ! they are singing now.

## HYMN.

*(Heard from within.)*

*“ By this soulless dust low weeping,*

*Let us shut the world away :*

*And prepare us for the keeping*

*Of God’s one eternal day.*

*“ Here life’s night breaks into morning,*

*Here all darkness disappears ;*

*Here the soul wins Heaven’s adorning,*

*While we’re left to Time and Tears.*

*“ Here Faith’s beacons are relighted,*

*Fanned and brightened by our sighs ;*

*Sundered friends are here united,*

*For grief clears our world-dulled eyes.*

*'Sin's and Sorrow's hot pursuing,  
Can no further than the grave;  
Hate's wild eye shrinks back on viewing  
Grief bent o'er Death's shoreless wave.*

*'Here where Peace hath its beginning,  
Here where God's true might is shewn,  
Let us set our souls the winning  
Of a glorious heavenly crown."*

•

PART VI.

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*Two years later.*

LADY MARVILLE'S TOWN MANSION.

SCENE, A BALCONY—NIGHT.

[*Music heard from Ball Room within.*]

*Enter IDONIA in haste.*

IDONIA.

Now for a moment's freedom, ere I test  
The power of my absorbing hate ! Once more  
To feel the shiver of the leaves ; to cool  
*The restless fire that burns within my eyes*

In the wide quiet of th' eternal sky ;  
To take into my soul the peaceful breath  
That stirs the bosom of God's holy night ;  
Before my mem'ry shall shut out them all.  
O Nature ! bounteous Nature ! would I could  
Forget my wrongs, and live for thee alone ;  
For thou art ever true, and truest when  
All other things are false. E'en now,—now that  
I shut the chambers of my heart awhile  
Against thee, lest thy gentle purity  
Should shake the steady purpose of my soul,—  
My being fain would lose itself in thee.  
Nay ! oft I almost feel a part of all  
I see : the stars, the trees, the patient moon,  
The fresh-voiced stream, the quiv'ring shadows, all  
Seeming to pulse in concord with my heart :  
Not even from within, where mirth is all  
Exuberant, and vanity and vice  
Rise ever to the joy-cup's brim, comes aught  
*Impure, to spoil thy silent eloquence.*



The music-wave that oozes from the dance,  
Comes like the last vibration of a joy  
Long past, and wins the trophy of a tear :  
It seems like strewing music-flowers upon  
The graves of buried years,—years from whose feet  
The red blood drippeth yet !—and fills my soul  
With an emotion strange and wild. But hark !  
It ceases ! Will he come ? Ah, yes ! I feel  
He'll come ; for felt I not his eyes float o'er  
Me as of old ? Yes ; and my heart gave no  
Response : the love that once did flourish there  
Lies as a withered plant, insensible  
To all surviving life.

O God ! O God !

Why didst thou grant this man the fee of all  
My happiness ? I would thou hadst of love  
Unbosomed me, rather than made me thus.  
How bitter 'tis to feel the thrill of love,  
To bow before its might, and find, at last,  
*The idol we adored, instead of dove,*

A serpent ! 'Tis as if we'd ta'en a flower,  
A beauteous flower, and couched it in our bosom,—  
Oft taking it from thence to feast our eyes  
Upon its loveliness. or drop a kiss  
Upon its bloom, till one sad day we see,  
Enfolded deep within its scented cup,  
A poisonous wasp. It stings, and love is dead !  
O better were one's lips unkissed for ever  
Than kissed by Judas ! O far better were it  
To sit with cold-faced Time alone upon  
A solitary hearth, and wait till all  
The weary days pass on to Death, than lay  
One's cheek, each night, beside the face of one  
By whom we are unloved ! Yet this, yea, more,  
My soul shall live through, so it find revenge !  
Avice's fate was best. To die, and so  
Slip from his toils into a perfect rest.  
I cannot mourn for her. Better her soul  
In heaven, her beauty mouldered by the worms,  
*Than she had lived an unresisting life*

With such hypocrisy as his ; for her  
Poor heart knew not the spirit of resentment ;  
It sought no aid save such as springs from tears,  
And tears are slender weapons of revenge.  
And so 'tis well she died. That letter wrought  
Its end ; it threw my shadow o'er his house :  
And Death was kind to lift her out of it.  
Hist ! Footsteps in the corridor ! 'Tis he !  
Now I will don the serpent's cunning, and  
The lion's stealth, yea, and the lion's courage !  
Now will I smile e'en though my soul shriek loud  
Within ; now shall mine eyes refuse to mirror  
The leaden grief-cloud, and the flashing pain,  
Sole light and darkness of my heart ; now, though  
His tongue be soft as is the honey'd sweetness  
Of undissembling love, his words shall not  
Avail to wring one drop of mercy from  
My vengeful soul. Yet will I play with him  
The injured woman's part, seeming to clothe  
My wrongs within a worldly courtesy,

The while I strew keen words, like darts, about  
His ears, lest, having nothing else to gaze at,  
He pierce through my disguise.

*[Leans carelessly over the balcony.]*

*Enter* BASIL.

BASIL.

Idonia !

IDONIA.

O sir ;

Why come you here ? the guests, my lady, all  
Will find most dainty food for gossip from  
Our meeting thus.

BASIL.

I'll grant them that, and more,  
For one short moment here. Idonia !  
This night, at sight of thee—my angel first  
And last,—my life's reality has merged

Into the golden dream that for so long  
Has hovered o'er my lonely sleep : it seems  
The past reality has been the dream,  
And what I deemed a dream, the life that God  
Bequeathed me with the years, but which, alas !  
Time did not shew till now.

IDONIA.

What mean these words ?

Methinks they echo others that have gone  
Before.

BASIL.

No, no ; they mean, that till this hour  
I ne'er have known myself, nor you : the world  
Had blurred my vision until wealth and rank  
Appeared sole synonyms of happiness ;  
But now, that both are gained, the film clears off,  
And love alone,—love, that I missed in years  
Gone by—shines clear, throwing ambition, rank  
*And wealth to utter darkness.*

IDONIA.

May you walk

In safety by this later light ! But what

If yet a higher, newer glory you

Discern ?

BASIL.

Man knows but these.

IDONIA.

Yet few know love ;

Mere surface passion oft is misnamed love.

BASIL.

But mine's no semblance, it is real, 'tis pure,—

The purer for its long prelude of pain.

IDONIA.

*(As if suddenly remembering herself)*

But why do I thus listen here ? Why, why

Do you make me the confidant of your  
New faith?

BASIL.

Because you are the god of its  
Eternity.

IDONIA.

Hush ! hush ! remember her  
That's dead.

BASIL.

I do ; and no dishonour add  
Unto her memory now, in action, word,  
Or thought.

IDONIA.

*(Continuing as if she had not heard him)*

Remember, too, a letter writ  
*One fading* autumn time, speaking so sweet,

So tender sweet of dying love, one would  
Have deemed its burial all complete. Whence, then,  
Doth come this love you speak of now? Is it  
The rehabilitated corpse, or but  
The ghost of that that's dead?

BASIL.

I do beseech  
You, spare me! Judge not all my life by its  
One error; rather let its deep and true  
Atonement claim the high reward I now  
Implore. Think of the baits that lured me thus  
Astray. My father's pride, my mother's love,  
The counsel of my friends, all pointed to  
Ambition as the worthiest end of life;  
What wonder then if my young spirit flew,  
Like some poor giddy moth, at this new light,  
So heightened by my close surroundings? What  
Wonder that I became ambition's slave?  
*What wonder that I met the moth's hard fate*



And burnt my wings? Ambition prompted me  
To wed ; ambition taught me to belie  
My soul, and turned me from my God. For what  
Return? Ah, mark! For wealth,—to pander to  
My pride,—for place,—to feel the joy of high  
Authority,—for fame,—to bluster forth  
My name, and hang thereon fair virtues which  
I ne'er had known,— for this poor wretched heart,  
Which now I bring, sere, bleeding, and outworn,  
As beggar'd claimant to your pity ; yes,  
Your pity! O if you withhold the gift  
I pray for now, my heart, alas ! is bankrupt  
Of all its love, and all its hope ; for love  
And hope have birth and die together. Speak !  
My love ! Idonia ! turn your eyes' clear light  
Upon me, that my soul thereby may find  
Some outlet from its present groping darkness.  
Wilt thou preserve me ?

IDONIA.

I preserve you? How?

BASIL.

By taking now this heart's poor Queenship, which  
God meant for you long years ago, ere yet  
The proffered realm had felt the sad dismay  
Of hot rebellion, and pale Sorrow had  
Usurped its throne. By taking now this love,  
This love which e'en ambition could not kill,  
But only held in mute abeyance till  
Clear sifted of all gross impurity,  
And clean as in its primal innocence ;  
So cleansed, so purified, I lay it at  
Your feet. Decree not that my heart shall now  
Be queenless ! O spurn not the love you once  
Did cherish !

IDONIA.

Ah ! but what of mine own love ?  
Do you but ask an anchorage for yours,  
And reckon not whether mine like haven find

In you? Suppose mine's gone. What if I did  
Your bidding,—“*plunged into the world's wide sea*  
*And so forgot,*”—rose up disrobed of love?  
Ay, what if it did perish then, and now  
Is all forgot?

BASIL.

Have you forgotten then?

IDONIA.

(*Aside*) Now for the fatal leap! I dare not look  
Into his eyes lest their too boisterous gaze  
Should wake the love that sleeps within my breast,  
And so disperse my hate ere 'tis fulfilled.  
(*Aloud*) Forgotten! No! My memory would not serve  
My weaken'd soul so kind a turn as that.

BASIL.

Then, sweet, you love me still?

IDONIA.

O ask me not !

Again I beg you think of her that's dead.

BASIL.

I do ; and if, as once it was believed,  
Departed spirits could be called to earth,  
I would invoke her sacred presence now,  
And ask her blessing on our love. Speak then !  
And let thy soft-tongued words give sealed assent  
Unto our long time interrupted bond.

IDONIA.

O give me time for closer counsel with  
My conscience ; leave me for five minute's space  
Ere you do claim the voucher of my soul's  
Resolve. Go, join the dance.

BASIL.

I go ; but not

To dance : for, leaden'd with suspense, my limbs  
Would shrink from action lest their noise should dull  
My ears' perception of the life or death  
Winged words your tongue's now pledged to give to  
                  them. [*Exit.*]

## IDONIA.

O whither shall I turn me now ? To God ?  
Ah ; no ! with Him is only goodness, and  
No goodness can be consort for my hate.  
Yet God is just ! and justice only do  
I seek. Then God ! dear God ! keep near me still,  
And if this man's perfidious soul is meet  
For my revenge, then let it fall to me  
As mine once fell to him ! What if his once  
Lie-blistered tongue now coin fair words of truth,  
Twang forth no more such soft and poisoned shafts  
Of base dissembling as when last I heard  
Its tones, 'twere yet no palliation for  
The past ; no, not if every future word

Were chorused by the music of a tear.  
So, come what may, my life's sole purpose is  
Revenge ; my buried father's warrior blood—  
Pure stream which God continues still in me—  
Throbs high in every winding vein, and heats  
My woman's soul with courage for its one  
Resolve. Then let this new-old wooer come,  
Whose sated appetite so hungers for  
The food it once refused. Yes, let him come ;  
There's no recanting now. Ah ! here he comes !

*Enter* BASIL

BASIL.

O say is't hell or heaven I enter now ?

IDONIA,

They come hereafter.

BASIL.

Yet there doth exist

In all our lives a forecast gloom or brightness  
Of hell or heaven, the presage of their long  
Hereafter ; therefore, since my life's the servant  
Of thine own will, thou art its arbitress  
'Twixt gloom and shine, 'twixt heaven and abject hell.  
Sweet love, declare my fate !

IDONIA.

The choice is thine.

BASIL.

And thine ?

IDONIA.

And mine.

BASIL.

O God ! I thank thee for  
This boon. My soul now treads the topmost peak  
Of joy ; o'ertops ambition ; laughs, ay, laughs  
For very ecstasy, as't looks askance

At all the pain, suspense, wild yearnings, and  
Despair it leaves behind to die upon  
The sigh-heaved bosom of the past. Life which  
Erewhile seemed stripped of joy holds joy exhaustless !  
O heavens! this is no phantasy ! No ! No !  
I clasp my eager arms about you thus ;  
Thus fearlessly enfold you in my close  
Embrace ; thus feel your soul's warmth leap against  
My heart, and know no dream could give such dôle  
Of bliss ; thus by a kiss-print— [*She shrinks back.*]  
O ! why start  
You back like one fierce struck with pain ?

IDONIA.

Nay heed

Me not ; 'tis but the 'wilder'd heart's rebound  
To this fresh waft of love. 'Tis past.

BASIL.

Then let my lips



At last give re-assurance by this kiss,  
Forerunner of a million more.

IDONIA.

I must

Return. My lady's eye will long ago  
Have marked my absence from the dance, and fixed  
Its cause on you.

BASIL.

Thus forced, my tongue must word  
A short farewell—sad, gulf-like sound ! but when  
To-morrow's sun leads forth another day, •  
Once more to Penrose Court I'll wend my way.

*[Exeunt severally.]*

## PART VII.

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*Six years later.*

NIGHTFALL. A WOODED PATHWAY ON THE OUTSKIRTS  
OF THE VILLAGE OF MOSSTOWN.

*(Enter AURELIAN, a Poet.)*

AURELIAN.

The world's great living stream flows ever on,  
And yet I linger here, content to tread  
Its banks : content to fling it all my songs  
And patient listen till the voice of Fame  
*Shall call me down.* My hope bids me believe

There lies safe hid beneath the Future's breast  
One sunny hour for me, which, born, shall far  
Outshine in lustre all the heaped up brightness  
Of hours gone past :—one hour which shall show clear  
The radiant porchway to my earthly heaven.  
All men aspire unto some earthly heaven,  
Created in the sky of their desires ;  
And my sweet earthly heaven shall grow from out  
The glorious hopes of Poesy. How oft  
I've sat me here, yearning for god-like words  
Of true interpretation, that all men  
Might read the fervent language of my soul,  
Might hear the voices that it hears, might see  
God's symbols scattered broadcast o'er the earth  
As it doth see, and gather there more faith  
Than e'er is culled from creeds. My day will come,  
Must come, for God would not implant these strong  
Heart-cravings and provide no goal for their  
Fruition. O ! how often have I watched,  
As now, the sunset glow die from the leaves

And seen their cheeks assume soft dewy tears  
Till morn brought back the truant sun to kiss  
Them off again : how often watched, as now,  
Night's shadow creeping close around, until  
At last, her archèd, star-gemmed brow, shone out  
Full fronted to my gaze : and, watching thus,  
How often have I deemed success was sure  
Achieved, and waited but the morrow for  
Perfection. May it come with next day's sun !

*[retires into the wood.]*

*(Enter PHŒBE and JASPER.)*

PHŒBE.

Ah, me ! to think now, Jasper, I should live  
For this ! to be benighted in a wood ;  
And you to lead me on.

JASPER.

I lead you on ?

Sure I'd no wish to hazard thus our necks.

PHOEBE.

*Our* necks, forsooth ! the rope's bespoke for thine  
Long since ; so calm thyself ; thou'rt safe as yet.

JASPER.

O hang such speech !

PHOEBE.

Nay thou'rt the hanging matter.

Ye lovers all profess much soft concern  
For women when the sky is clear ; but let  
One single cloud loom nigh, straightway you turn  
Your backs on all profession, and this soft  
Concern is visible in its true bounds—  
Yourselves. Were I a man, and brought a maid  
Thus far abroad, I'd sing to her some song,  
Some merry roundelay, to charm away  
Her fear : go first to part th' embracing boughs :  
And strew the road so with my pleasantries,

The scent of them should stay behind to guide  
All future lovers through the self same path.

JASPER.

I've known thee but three days, and that's short time  
To take full measurement of thy desires.

PHOEBE.

Methinks you never knew a maid before,  
You show such ignorance of maidish wants.

JASPER.

All women have not like desires, have they?

PHOEBE.

All women count one pleasure best of all,—  
The pleasure 'tis to feel a man doth strive  
To please. You do not strive !

JASPER.

Let me be safe

Again on open ground, where I can see  
A minute's space before me, and I'll sing,  
Or dance, or caper to the lightest tune  
Your buoyancy can pick : but here, where all  
One's life is compassed in a few yards gap  
Left by the trees ; where danger, ay, or death  
May crouch behind the nearest bush, I'll none  
Feed your frivolities.

PHŒBE.

(*Aside*) Now mark the man !

He's coward to the core ; but still his sex  
Bespeaks protection in itself, and that's  
Enough. (*Aloud*) Frivolities, if loud enough,  
May frighten *thieves*. But stay, I see a light !  
Follow my finger's point.

JASPER.

'Tis but a star.

PHŒBE.

Do stars hang level with your nose ? If so,  
Why 'tis a star, if not, it is the place  
I seek. "A cottage on the outer edge  
O'the wood," said they. Now then, let me collect.

JASPER.

Collect ? O what ?

PHŒBE.

What you're in want of, thoughts.

AURELIAN *is heard in the wood, singing.*

*Till song is dumb,*

*The past, the To come,*

*Shall each throw a ray*

*Through the fog of to-day.*

JASPER.

O Phœbe, I am lost ! Methought this wood  
*Looked murderous !*



PHOEBE.

Keep silence, dolt, and listen.

Murder aye creeps with bated breath ; ne'er heralds  
His knife with songs. O hist ! he sings again !

JASPER.

But where's the light ?

PHOEBE.

Don't look for't nigh your head.

(AURELIAN resumes.)

*In the early years,  
Ere the birth of tears ;  
Ere calm-eyed peace  
Her rule did cease ;  
Ere sin was hurl'd  
From Hell to the World ;  
Ere the sun gleamed red*

*With the blood of the dead ;  
Love roamed at his will  
Over dale and hill,  
Over rock and mound,  
Over wooded ground ;  
Bestrewing his treasure  
Where'er 'twas his pleasure.  
Both man and maid,  
Both saint and jade,  
In turn felt smart  
Of his joy winged dart,  
Till all the world round  
His scholars were found,  
Till all learned what bliss  
Was presaged in a kiss.*

PHOEBE.

low, Jasper, could you sing like that, and had  
the heart, you'd have some semblance of a man.

(AURELIAN continues.)

*But Sin came at last  
This joyaunce to blast ;  
And tracking love's tread  
His spume fast bespread ;  
Bespatter'd love's flowers,  
And poisoned love's bowers.  
Hence all love's joy  
Doth bear sin's alloy ;  
And pure bosom'd love  
Is known but above.  
Man ! do not delay,  
But purge sin away,  
For love shall descend  
When sin's reign doth end.*

(Enter AURELIAN.)

PHŒBE.

O, sir ; I know you are the nightingale

That charms this lonely wood, for I do see  
The music still vibrating in your eyes.  
We thank you, sir, for your sweet song, and beg  
You will be creditor for further thanks  
By being convoy for us through the trees.

AURELIAN.

Gladly, my maid. Each tree is index'd clear  
Upon my mind, ay, almost each day's rise  
Or wane of verdure. Where would you be led ?

PHŒBE.

We seek a cottage hereabouts, where lives  
One Basil Blount.

AURELIAN.

A cottage ! Basil Blount !  
What mean you by these opposites ? I fear  
Your wits are being played upon.

PHŒBE.

My tongue  
Outsoars my prudence, or the honesty  
That sits upon your face makes me so fearless  
That my poor wits betray to you, that which  
They'd meant to hide within their shrewdness. Say  
You'll give no edge of harm unto my words,  
And I will tell you all.

AURELIAN.

My mission is  
To render good, not harm.

PHŒBE.

But know you where  
This cottage lies ?

AURELIAN.

I know that strangers are

Close housed in yonder cottage ; that the light  
Which sits at its low casement keeps more true  
Unto the night than her most constant star :  
It comes before the twilight and outstays  
The dawn.

PHŒBE.

'Tis they ! O, sir ; I fear that light  
Doth witness more of evil than of good.  
But you shall hear. You'd catch some vestige of  
The scattered news which gave proud Basil's first  
Formed marriage to the world ; likewise, some news  
Of his wife's death ere yet the seasons had  
Safe rounded their first year of wedlock ; so  
His after-marriage unto General Brand's  
One orphan'd daughter would find way to you.

AURELIAN.

So much, no more.

PHŒBE.

Then I will briefly give  
The rest. This second wife, erewhile my mistress,  
Had loved and deemed herself beloved by this  
Proud Basil, in days prior to his first  
Planned marriage. What it was that caused a breach  
In their affection I know not, but this  
I know ; that from the day she first discerned  
That breach, she took another shape, transformed  
Herself from gentleness to violence,  
Tinged all her speech with that impatience which  
Bespeaks the soul's unrest, and moved apart  
Like one all smouldering with conspiracy.  
Then Death stole in upon her moodiness,  
Sweeping her father from her side, when, for  
A time, tears gave her back her tenderness ;  
But when she came to know that Basil's wife  
Had passed away, her moodiness returned  
A hundred fold, but shorter of endurance.

Then, meteor-like, she swept across the sky  
Of high society ;—I will not say  
For darksome purpose,—yet she ne'er returned  
Until she brought proud Basil at her heels.  
Then they were wed, roamed long in foreign lands,  
And I sought other service. For the rest  
I credit Rumour, who oft flits about  
The servants' hall. It says, his new wife led  
Him to diverge from all his time-worn ways,  
To yield his fore-front place at the bright helm  
Of government, to plunge deep in the stream  
Of pleasure, and so waste his wedded wealth ;  
And all to find black Ruin standing stark  
Before him at the end. The end is come.  
They stare at it appalled in yonder cottage !

## AURELIAN.

Indeed, it is a rueful tale you tell :  
A tale of love outgrown to hate. But why  
Seek you thus to confront their misery



PHŒBE.

To draw her memory back to purer days.  
'Tis much I risk, yet I do fear her not,  
'Tis woman unto woman now, and not  
Mistress and servitor.

AURELIAN.

That's well. I feared  
Some idler purpose led you hither ; but  
If you do come essaying to restore  
The feeling to a deadened, hate-steeled heart,  
My wishes and my aid, so far as they  
Avail, go with you.

PHŒBE.

Thanks. But where is Jasper ?

JASPER.

*(rising from a mound hard by.)*

Here, Phœbe ! conning an old song, of which  
*I yet but grab the tail.*

PHCEBE.

So you can think  
Of songs when some one slips 'tween you and danger.

AURELIAN.

Sing us this tail piece, friend.

JASPER.

Well, you lead on.

[*Exeunt.* JASPER singing :—

*"'Tis money stands above  
Either virtue or love,  
And it's O for the man that has riches !  
Man's valued by his gains,  
Without a thought of brains,  
And it's O 'tis the gold that bewitches !"*

## PART VIII.

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BED-CHAMBER IN A COTTAGE.

BASIL *lying on the Bed.*

*A Lamp burning at the Casement.*

IDONIA *sitting near it.*

IDONIA.

Death's shadow deepens round his fire-less eyes,  
And my revenge draws near its consummation ;  
It's last slow poison drop is poured to-day.  
I only wait to trail my triumph proud  
*Before him, and my long and patient striving*

Ceases. The height I've climbed is won, but there  
Exists no level tract for after-days :

The path ends in a straight-cut precipice,  
And, ere my laugh of triumph is all spent,  
[ topple down. It must be so ; for what  
Can life be shorn of purpose, dead to love ?

An endless wailing on a haggard shore  
For ship-help from a speckless sea ; a dropping  
To Death's dark desert level, there to wait  
Until his lagging footsteps stray to you ;  
Or, worse than all, perhaps, a ceaseless haunting  
Of the worn spirit by torture-faced Remorse.  
Strange, that the hand which only deals a blow  
For justice sake, should feel recoiling sting  
Like that which follows evil deeds ; yet, that  
It will be so with me, these forecast shadows  
That flit athwart my brain, augur too well.

Let me look my conscience in the face,  
And see if aught of evil's mirrored there  
In *guilt-hued blush* or flinching eye ! I sought

But justice, and true retribution, not  
To wreak an undue anger, or fulfil  
A wicked purpose ; yet the goal of one  
Seems goal for all : but whence, whence comes it ?  
Can justice e'er be evil ? Ah, but who  
Shall say what justice is ? who mete it out ?  
Can one that's injured mete his injury  
Its punishment unstrained ? Man weighs the soul  
Of fellow-man but by its action on  
Himself, and if therefrom springs wrong, forgets  
That any good remains. What, if I have  
Not read his heart aright ? O had I seen  
Thus clearly ere I entered on this path,  
To day would not have found me by this wreck !  
My evil then is this ! I have assumed  
God's office, and ignored his majesty.  
Forgive me, God ! *Forgive ! Forgive !* How strange  
A sound clings to that word ! FORGIVE ! Perchance  
God would forgive these sin-steeped wrongs I've borne  
*About me* through these restless years to spur

Them to to-day : forgive the treachery,  
The sin, the falsehood, and dishonour which  
Has made my life a foul deformity !  
How great is God if he can thus forgive !  
How abject and how small am I, who have  
Shut out forgiveness from my soul !

Again

He dreams ; again he murmurs forth my name,  
Softly as if he whispered it into  
The ear of Death ; again his lips vibrate  
With tones of counterfeited tenderness ;  
*Again I'm nerved for my revenge !* Deceit  
Clings even to his dreams !

BASIL. (*dreaming*)

Idonia !

Idonia ! My soul stands at heaven's gate  
And can not enter till you come. Come, love,  
O come and deify me !

IDONIA. (*aside*)

I am here,  
But 'tis to curse and not to deify !

BASIL. (*awaking*)

Idonia ! Where art thou ?

IDONIA. (*violently*)

I am here !  
Look at me !

BASIL.

O come nearer, love ; and give  
My dream the lie. Methought you stood afar,  
With back-thrown length of arm, and eyes that blazed  
Forth hate from out your hair's long loosened blackness ;  
Stood all unmoved, like hate transformed to stone,  
Nor heeded all my soul's impassioned callings.  
*O let thy voice unseal this maddening silence,*

That I may know I've passed the realm of dream !  
Why stand'st thou there, as if my dream had spread  
Infection unto thee ?

IDONIA.

Infection's here  
More noxious than aught bred from dream.

BASIL.

What mean  
These wild-tongued words, and this strange action ? Say,  
What would'st thou have ?

IDONIA.

I'd have the buried years  
Recalled !

BASIL.

Recall them not ; they bloomed not sweet  
*As this, to me Time's parting gift, tinged though*



It be with Death and wan Adversity :  
For, like the sun, our love shall brightest be  
In setting.

IDONIA.

Cease your mockeries, throw off  
Your threadbare mask, and gaze, gaze on the view  
I summon up.

BASIL.

Thou art not, can'st not be  
Idonia !

IDONIA.

As thou hast deemed her, no !  
No more than thou art that fond Basil thou  
Would'st have me think thou art. Now seest thou !  
Then follow me ! Far back there stands a year  
Which to my heart gives constant pasturage  
*For its revenge ; the year which bare first seed*

Of all my woe ; the year when thou wert slipt  
Upon my path, to torture and eat up  
My hope, and coil thy perjuries around  
My innocence : and I, poor trusting fool,  
Unschool'd in treachery, did frame my soul  
An idol from no stabler stuff than thy  
Base mummeries? My worshipping was short,  
Yet deep as if't had centred on a truth  
Sincere as Christian faith. Thou know'st—unless  
Thy memory so subserves thy conscience that  
It keeps no catalogue of thy misdeeds—  
How slight a gap there was, between the hour  
Which witness bore unto the close-lipped kiss,  
The tear-filmed eye, the shower of passionate vows,  
And all the well-feigned lingering which marked  
That summer parting down at Penrose Court,  
And that one hour of tempest which drove all  
The sunshine from my young life's sky ; between  
The hour when breathed my soul not elsewhere  
*Than in the atmosphere of thy deceit,*

With no one friendly power on earth nor yet  
In heaven, to whisper it 'beware,' and that  
More darksome hour which saw thy treachery  
Scorch up my heart.

Dost mind the letter which  
Did act as torch? What were its words? It spoke,  
Methinks, of "hasty bonds," "forgettings," and  
The like. So speaks it still. See! see! 'tis here!  
Through all these years I've worn it next my heart,  
That it might act its part in ending what  
It did begin. How well 't has served me; ah!  
How well! If e'er arose one wavering thought  
Within me, this did shame it to retreat;  
If e'er I wearied of my work, I gained  
Fresh zest from this; so then, I say, 't has served  
Me well. If aught inanimate e'er heard  
Or saw, then this poor defaced page did hear  
My vow of vengeance, and it now shall see  
How well that vow is kept. It makes thee tremble!  
*Ah; 'tis a wondrous ghost! Thou thoughtest that*

'T had wrought the end thou charged it with, allayed  
This girlish passion, and all ended there.

BASIL.

Mercy ! Mercy !

IDONIA.

Thou thoughtest I took up  
The cross thou'd'st carved for me, without one moan  
Of anger or reproach ; and so thou wooed  
And married Mammon ere she had seen through  
Thy mask ; again defrauded innocence.  
Still, my revenge was but a chrysalis :  
Its first life-flutter was to shew thy wife  
Thy double treachery. A well planned letter  
Told her the tale. Poor Avice ! it was wrong  
To thee, but thou'rt in heaven and can'st forgive !  
Then, as approving my design, Death stole  
Her from all contact of our strife, and my  
Avenging purpose had full birth, took wing,

And, in due time, beset thy steps as thou  
In prior time did'st beset mine. We met.  
Rememb'rest thou the ball—the balcony—  
The lying vows re-uttered ! Ah ; how proud  
Thou wert of thy accomplished acting then,—  
Too proud to see the deeper part assumed  
By me. Enough, that thou can'st see it now.  
Thy pretty speeches are e'en now vibrating  
Upon mine ears. Thou spakest of ambition ;  
Piled all thy ugly load of black deceit  
Upon ambition's shoulders, but thou could'st  
Not stay it there. Thou spakest scornfully  
Of the return ambition made to thee,  
For thus espousing it in place of love.  
One sweet return was wealth. Where is it now ?  
One more return was place. What place is thine  
To-day ? The last return was Fame. How sounds  
Her voice to-day ? Revenge hath conquered all ;  
Dispers'd thy wealth, gagg'd wide-mouth'd Fame, and from  
*High place hath led thee hither.*

BASIL.

Hear me ! hear me !

Ere I do die ! Idonia ! O turn not  
Thine eyes away from me ! Look at me ! look !  
For look ! I die ! that thou may'st read my truth !  
Hear while I swear—

IDONIA.

Mine ears are yet too full  
Of thy past swearings.

BASIL.

O, my God ! wilt thou  
Not make her understand my dying words ?  
By all my hopes of heaven, by all my hopes  
Of peace and rest, I swear that I have loved thee ;  
Loved thee, Idonia, through all ; through all.  
Stay, Death, O stay until she turns to me.  
Idonia ! Idonia ! my own ! my love !

I go—I die—one kiss—just one, so that  
The angels may distinguish me, and I  
Have peace. Come ! Come ! My soul stands at heaven's  
gate.

There's no revenge. O, I have sinned—but much,  
Much have I loved. Wait, Death, O wait until  
She turns to kiss. (*pause*) Idonia ! (*pause*) I love  
Thee—yes, I love—thee— (*dies*)

## IDONIA.

(*turning hastily round, after a long silence, and  
rushing to the bed*)

Say those words again !

Basil ! belovèd Basil ! Ah, thou'rt tired.  
Yet say those words again and I'll believe  
Thee ! See ! I've come to thee. Give me thine hand.  
Come, let me kiss thy cheek. Both, both are cold !  
Thy radiant lips have lost their warmth ; and why,  
O why dost stare so wild, and so unmoved  
*At me ?* Did'st thou not call upon me but

A moment gone? Speak but one little word,  
And I will sit all night beside thee ere  
I ask another! O speak!

What was't he said?

His voice was tuned to such soft tenderness,  
It seemed to close the fiery mouths of all  
The crying years, and give my soul safe passage  
Unto its far back time of innocence.  
“I love thee!” he did say. Yet why should those  
Three words, which ever stood a-tiptoe on  
His tongue, and which mine ears had ceased to take  
The sense of, from their oft recurrence, strike  
So deep into my soul? Because, perchance,  
It was his soul that spoke—soul unto soul!  
O could I hear the words once more to gain  
Assurance! (*Knocking without*) Cease that noise, or  
else mine ears  
Will miss the precious words they hunger for.  
Still is he silent; still so cold, ice-cold!



O but my tears shall warm his pallid face !

*(knocking repeated)*

O get ye gone ! I cannot hear !

*[puts her ear to BASIL'S lips]*

No breath !

No heart beat ! O has Death thus frozen his lips ?

Is this Death's coldness clinging silent here ?

It is ! It is ! O Death, sweet, awful Death !

Come back, and take me where his soft-toned voice

Can reach to me !

*Enter PHŒBE.*

*(She screams on seeing IDONIA over BASIL'S body.)*

PHŒBE.

Help ! help ! there's murder here !

*Enter AURELIAN.*

Alas ! he's dead ! and she stares senseless there !

AURELIAN.

Approach her : call her gently by her name,

Your voice may turn her to the past.

IDONIA.

Hush ! Hush !

PHŒBE (*advancing*).

Mistress ! Idonia !

IDONIA.

(*rising and staring vacantly.*)

That voice belongs

Not to this life ! Life ? Life ? There is no life !  
Stand off ! See ! yonder comes a perfumed zephyr,  
Eden-born ; whereon there rides a silver light  
Outbranching like soft starry rays thrown slant  
Across Night's veil of blackness. Through the light  
Rises a youth,—fair as the first sweet flush  
Of summer morn,—streaking the silver with  
His golden curls, his face and eyes all fired  
With love, with love of me ! See, now he smiles  
On me ! O ! who is there in all the world

So happy now as I? Yet, yet he smiles,  
With lips the essence of soul-kisses! Nearer,  
Nearer he comes! (*screams*) O heavens! there's blood  
upon him!

Who says 'twas I that did it! I that love him!  
I that do worship him as Christian men  
Do worship God! No, no! ye'll not believe  
My soul so black as that! (*pause*) The light grows dim,  
The blood-streak dies, and his sweet beaming face  
Is curtained from my sight. What shall mine eyes  
Encounter now? (*sees BASIL'S body*) He's here! here,  
and asleep!

Without one blood-spot on his snowy throat,  
Without one look of anger or of pain!  
I have been living through a feverous dream!  
Sleep on, dear soul! (*pause*) Who mentioned Death?  
Whence comes

This chilling tremor freezing up my breath?  
From him? Ay, I remember. It was Death

*That came just now; 'tis Death that crawls so cold*

Within my blood. Kind, loving Death, I thank thee !

(PHŒBE *and* AURELIAN *approach as* IDONIA  
*sinks on the bed.*)

Stand off ! I know ye not ! I hear his voice.

Now, Basil, now thy lips shall know no hard

Restraint. I come—to thee—I come ! (dies)

PHŒBE.

O sir,

This tragic ending of two lives, each formed  
For each, but never rightly understood,  
Reflects some blame on me that I have come  
Too late.

AURELIAN.

Ah, 'tis not thus ; their reckoning was  
With God, and He hath said, " VENGEANCE IS MINE !"

## CLARICE.

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### I.

From yonder cottage casement, nestling safe

Within the covert of broad trees, there strays

A taper's trembling beam, a feeble waif

Of struggling light, whose dim and fitful rays

Weave gloomy shadows round a maiden's face.

Nursing her stricken heart, see Clarice stare

Far out into the night with vacant gaze ;

Her mind, half broken with its weight of care,

Sustains its strength but by the sacred strength of pray

## II.

Her large eyes, eloquent, with heaven's clear blue  
    Tinged soft, fair mirrored all her soul, and wore  
The tear-pearled veil of grief: the peach-like hue  
    That once had flushed her virgin cheek, no more  
    Was seen, for heart-wrung tears long, long before  
Had drowned it in their floods: her lips were pale,  
    As if some fierce last kiss had torn their store  
Of life away: her breathing seemed the frail  
And smothered rippling of a never-ceasing wail.

## III.

Awhile upon the moon her grief-strained gaze  
    She turns, her thoughts slow blending with its light,  
And shaping thus:—"For ever, through the maze  
    Of varying clouds, thy never-halting flight  
    Keeps pace, age after age, with dusky Night.  
Thy patience teaches me to be resigned  
    To Fate, whose hand is ever up to smite  
Unseen, or innocent or guilty mind,  
*With arm unwav'ring, yet till fallen undivined.*

## IV.

“’Tis now three years since Gerald went away,—

Three years in time, though Grief hath stretched each  
To dreary centuries of blank dismay. [year

Sometimes I think my heart is dead, and fear

The life that’s left full soon will disappear.

O Moon ! if thou wert messenger of love,

I’d bid thee carry to my Gerald’s ear

The nightly plaints I make to thee, to prove

No blow of fate true constancy can ever move.

## V.

“ But hark ! the wind sweeps forth with seething noise,

And in fierce swift-winged gusts begins to blow,

Whirring like rockets in the air. Its voice

At each new gust more turbulent doth grow ;

The clouds are swept from off the sky’s fair brow,

And nearer unto God the stars seem blown.

The wind, methinks, doth calendar my woe,

Flooding my ears with voices long since-flown,

***Adding their sadness to my heart’s incessant moan.***

VI.

“ I e’en could tell my story by the wind !

    Whene’er it sighs, I think of that sad night  
My mother died : poor Gerald with his kind,  
    Good face, sits by her bed, reading the bright  
    And holy words of God’s own book ; the light  
Burns dim ; around her neck I fling my arms,  
    And watch, through hazy tears, her waning sight  
Descry the outskirts of that land which charms [alarms.  
Th’ unfettered soul when summoned from the world’s

VII.

“ Sometimes it brings back feelings of the chill

    Which Death’s unwelcome presence left behind ;  
Sad days when Gerald’s love vain sought to kill  
    The anguish that was palsyng my mind,  
    And yet, thou sad, thou sorrow-voicèd wind,  
I would thou could’st re-bring those woful days :  
    For then, my own dear Gerald I should find,  
Then all my woe would fly before his gaze,  
*And Love would make a sunshine where’tis now thick haze.*



## VIII.

“ One night, the leaves in joyous rustle stirred,  
Whisp’ring soft symphony to Love’s sweet song,—  
That voiceless strain which hearts do chant unheard,—  
And here we sat, my head couched on his strong  
And manly breast ; his one hand coiled among  
My curls, the other pulsing slow in mine.

’Twas ’midst such pleasing swoon that first this long  
Dull pathway of despair I did divine,  
As Gerald told me he had changed his life’s design.

## IX.

“ ‘Clarice !’ he quivering cried, ‘ thy saintly love  
Enslaves and makes a coward of my heart ;  
Its sweet entanglement keeps me above  
That struggling world where man should play his part  
And strive for needful gold in Fortune’s mart :  
At home, hard words by hard resentments met,  
Swell adverse winds of discontent, that dart  
Their shafts athwart my soul, and bring regret.  
*So, dazzled by thy love, man’s duty I forget.*’

## X.

“ Though crushed beneath his words, I strove to calm  
His wild unrest with hopes I scarcely felt :  
And so the days wore on ; still came no balm  
To heal the widening wound his home had dealt ;  
And last, he left the place where he had dwelt  
Through all his days ; and, fired with wrath, he fled  
Unto a neighbouring town, and, ere he felt  
His passion die, soldiers with martial tread [sped.  
Approached, and quick he joined their ranks, and with them

## XI.

“ When the wind shrieks, it tells me of the day  
When tramping soldiers hurried to the door  
With Gerald decked in soldierly array.  
My heart awoke to sudden tumult, more  
Convulsive than it e’er had known before.  
My struggling words, o’erwhelmed in sobs, were drowned  
Before their utterance. The soldiers bore  
My woe emotionless, and each disowned,  
E’en if he felt, the wild despair my heart had found.

## XII.

“Then, like some soul firm held within Death’s clutch,  
That for a moment hurls the conqueror back,  
To gasp a parting word before his touch  
Creeps back again ; so from the wasting rack  
That surged within, I made one fierce attack  
Of bitter words, before my stricken mind  
Would yield to tread alone life’s darkened track.  
And no man spake, till coming from behind,  
Poor Gerald kissed my cheek and bade me be resigned.

## XIII.

“And so he left me to these dismal days  
Of troubled solitude and gnawing pain ;  
And now my love-lorn soul for ever prays  
That God will bring my Gerald back again.  
For three hope-withering months I’ve looked in vain  
For news of him : till sad despondency  
Doth weigh me down and dulls my weary brain.”  
And now the full grown storm rode wild and free  
*Till time with steady march had passed its boundary.*

## XIV.

And then, the moon with all its starry throng  
Returned, and Silence phantom-like re-rose.  
She heard sharp footfalls clang without ere long,  
And, flushed with terror, heard their dying throes  
Outside the door that guarded her repose.  
Then came a knock, so faint 't would scarce have raised  
A lap-dog's ready bark, but which fell close  
Upon her heart like death bell's boom. Amazed  
Upon the opening door with fear-strained eyes she gazed.

## XV.

One glimpse, one shriek, and all the rest is guessed,  
For, framed within the doorway, stood revealed  
A feeble shivering thing, behind whom pressed  
Soft moonlight like a white translucent shield  
Whose argent face was all inwrought and sealed  
With shadows of quaint heraldry, transferred  
From leaf-shorn trees. Poor Clarice backward reeled,  
Her wild affrighted eyes all dim and blurred  
With strange unconsciousness ; and neither spake a word.

## XVI.

Striving in vain to speak, her eyes firm hung

Upon his face. "Clarice !" he said, "'tis I !

"Gerald !" and round her neck his arms he flung.

Her lustrous eyes flashed forth in mute reply,

And all the pent-up passion that for nigh

Three years had struggled in her soul, now burst

The floodgates of her heart : full tenderly

She stroked his dripping hair, and gently nursed

His haggard face, like one for kisses all athirst.

## XVII.

"Close bolt the door, my love ; put out the light !

Or else 't will lift its livid finger here

To guide the wolves that track my weary flight.

O let me taste for one short hour the clear

Immortal fragrance of our love sincere,

That so love-primed I may yield up to death

Ere wake from love's delicious swoon !" In fear

She clasps him to her quick heaved breast, and saith,

"If thou must die, God grant I too may yield my breath !"

## XVIII.

A crowd of hurried words, and Clarice felt

Fate's darkening shadow swamp her soul ; and now,  
Rude ghastly fears rushed blindly on, and dwelt  
Unchallenged in her heart. He told her how  
The soldier's yoke day after day, did grow .

More hard to bear, until at last it bred

Sad longings, which in turn begat the vow  
To slip the chain which bound him to that dread  
Despairing life ; and how, defying all, he'd fled.

## XIX.

And now they drew the veil o'er Memory,

Shut out the Past and all its lingering pain,  
And Future's dark hues clouds refused to see.

The moments now were bright with love, and fain  
Would they have stopped Time's progress, so the reign  
Of love might ever in its zenith rest.

And so life's blackest clouds sometimes retain  
A ray of purest joy, a hidden crest  
Of light, by which their terrors are awhile repressed.

## XX.

The moments filled an empty hour of Time,  
And Love still kept them in his mystic sway ;  
But ere another hour with unheard chime  
Was garnered to the past, a sad dismay  
Crept o'er their souls and chased their joy away.  
Low, awful sounds, like broken echoes cast  
Into the ear of Night, seemed to convey  
The message of their doom ; and, all aghast,  
They heard the muffled tramp of soldiers nearing fast.

## XXI.

On, on they came, in subdued turbulence,  
Like tigers drawing near some scented prey ;  
And Gerald turned towards the door through whence  
The voices crept, and gently put away  
The lovely arms that held him in their sway.  
The door was wrenched, and his defiant eye  
Was soon confronted by the cold array  
Of armed men : a dozen swords leapt high,  
And "base deserter !" was their wild and blatant cry.

## XXII.

Clasped hands and tear-burnt eyes, impassioned pray'r

To man for mercy and to God for aid,

Availed not ; no, discipline's stony stare

Alone a cold and dismal answer made.

So, for a single hour of joy, he paid

A thousand hours of pain, a long disgrace.

And both, long seasons dwelt in Sorrow's shade ;

Till Time's notched dial shewed the hour and place

For them to enter paths which led to brighter days.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XXIII.

'Twas when the stricken years ran deep with blood,

When Kings hired Murder in the name of War

To kill their fellow-men : a soldier stood

With thousands more who'd journeyed from afar

To plant their feet beside Death's blood-stained car,—



Stood on a height 'midst rain of fire and shell,  
'Midst smoke and flame, and felt nor wound nor scar,  
Till from the column's dwindling front he fell,  
Shorn down and left behind with many a rough farewell.

## XXIV.

There where the dying and the wounded lie,  
A lady, pale, yet O ! so sadly sweet,  
Moves soft from couch to couch, soothes them that die,  
And aideth those who'll live, but all doth greet  
With words to lead them to Christ's holy feet.  
See, now she nears a feeble, bandaged head :  
Its lips begin to move, her heart to beat,  
He speaks : " Clarice ! Clarice ! " No more is said,  
She only kneels and mutely prays beside his bed.

\* \* \* \* \*



## XXV.

Then Peace came back unto the stricken years,  
Inspired the warring Kings with purer breath,  
And cleansed the blood-stained land with tender tears.  
The warriors, released from strife with death,  
Return to England for proud Victory's wreath ;  
And Gerald too some small reward doth claim,  
Now that his sword lies quiet in its sheath ;  
He wins ; ah, what ? a little wealth, much fame,  
And Clarice as the wife with an unblemished name.

# THE BIRTH OF THE ROSE.

A PHANTASY.

---

The flush of summer warms the cheek of night  
When silence ushers out the languid day,  
The flute-like cadence of the nightingale  
Thrills through the heaving bosom of the wood ;  
And the night wind, that beareth from afar  
The breath of the swelling sea, now passeth o'er  
The trembling leaves, with soft Æolian sweep,  
*And supple willows bend to catch its kiss.*

The crescent moon sails softly o'er the trees,  
Tipping the branches with a golden glow ;  
And far within heaven's solitary depths  
The tranquil stars each other mutely scan.

The Fairy Queen assembles all her nymphs  
To-night, beside a coreless oak, the haunt  
Of creeping moss, of lichen and of fern ;  
Where, shimmering to the moon, a fresh-voiced stream  
Discourses music through the reeds which Pan  
Hath left ungathered there.

Across the brook  
The Queen and all her dazzling train—their robes  
All sunset-hued, their forms all pliant to  
The murmurous melody that fills the night—  
Are ferried fast, soft couched in skiffs contrived  
*Of shells from Neptune's deep cavernous stores.*

Each bears a glowworm's bright phosphoric lamp,  
And Zephyrus attends to waft them o'er.  
And now, as forms the glowing circle round  
The Oak, the Queen ascends her bowered throne.  
A purple foxglove crowns her streaming hair,  
And from her shoulders flow the flossy wings  
Of butterflies ; her ear-rings dew drops are ;  
And all her soft entrancing, peach-smooth skin  
Doth glow beneath her sheen of gauzy robes  
Like sun-kissed waves.

She thus harangues her train :—

“Ye lithe limb'd elves draw near, and hear your task!  
The blue-eyed Queen of Love, persistent wooer  
Of golden haired Adonis, further seeks  
To melt his adamantine heart, and tempt  
Him with that fairest gift of earth—a flower ;  
In choice whereof she supplicates our aid.  
So speed ye over hill and wooded dale,

O'er daisied meadow, and o'er heath'ry moor,  
And cull me flow'rs of tint and odour sweet,  
From which I'll shape a lovelier than all."

Away they skip in glad obeisance,  
Through Nature's leaf-arched aisles, and each bears off  
Some blossom as't inhales its morrow's life  
From out the gently sleeping earth. They pluck  
Fair violets lolling in the dew, green moss  
From steep and rocky ledge, tall poppies as  
They nod amidst their gold-ear'd wealth of corn,  
Pale water lilies shielding dimpling streams,  
And so, all gems of mountain, wood, and field.

The smooth-faced cattle, couched in grassy meads,  
Are dreaming now ; the lizard slyly leaves  
His reedy ambush ; and the night-moths sport  
*Athwart the trees.* In confidence the snail

Now drags her dusky fort and plods along  
Her slimy track ; swift hares dart through the copse ;  
The sheep securely sleep within the fold ;  
The moonbeams dance unflecked, except by clouds  
Of swarming insects ; and primitively lives  
The world, while man rests snugly in his lair.

Full soon the fairies bear their perfumed spoil  
Unto their Queen, whose eye speaks silent thanks  
To all. She then surveys with raptured look  
Each rainbow tint there at her feet display'd,  
And greedily doth feast her eyes on its  
Luxuriance. And now she toys with them ;  
First seizing this, then that, rich textured flow'r ;  
And in her choice doth waver, like a maid  
Midst wealth of jewels who can choose but one.

*The comely cowslips press their gold hued lips*

Upon the sweet forget-me-nots. There lie  
Chaste tulips side by side with pale-faced lilies,  
Carnations, daises, snowdrops, daffodills,  
And sprigs of new-shorn hay. All sweetly waft  
Their mingled incense o'er the shady grove.  
Choosing at last, she takes her pigmy shears,  
And cuts and trims most fascinating forms  
From choicest leaves, as petals for her flow'r,  
And wraps them fold on fold, until the whole  
Assumes a beauty that transcendeth all.  
Then she distils to one delicious odour  
The richest scents, and bathes the flow'r therein.

All eager-eyed and mute, towards the hedge  
They hie, and lay the lifeless flow'r upon  
The thorn ; then bend in silent pray'r, whereat  
E'en Muta holds awhile her thin-drawn breath.  
At last, there comes a sound like rushing wings, upon  
*The stillness, and bliss-answering Heaven pours forth*



Its calm and odorous breath. And now the flow'r  
Unfurls its tinted leaves,—it breathes ! It lives !  
And earth hath found one treasure more. Sole Queen  
Of Flow'rs 'tis crown'd, and called "the Rose." Yet heav'n  
This penalty severe exacts for its  
Imperfect propagation, that it ne'er  
Shall live, but with the treach'rous thorn ; of all  
Earth's flow'rs it shall most fragile be ; and live  
The lovely emblem of fair beauty's fate.

The Fairy Queen disperses now her train,  
And hastes to Venus with a new-born Rose.

**MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.**



## A VISION OF SPRING.

---

### I.

With mind o'erclouded by the mists of grief,  
My memory flitting to a long past joy ;  
With heart all numbed and senseless to relief,  
Spurning hope from me, calling it decoy  
To lure the heart for Misery to destroy :  
Life seemed a desert without one green glade  
To rest the soul or turn the eye's annoy :  
Baffled resolves and yielded chances made  
The past a long drear pathway of eternal shade

## 2.

Lonely I sat within my cheerless room,  
Longing for Death to lift me from despair,  
When lo ! my wearied eyes saw from the gloom  
A spirit rise, like incense in the air,  
With lustrous wings and backward streaming hair.  
“ Borne on the pinions of the warm south wind  
I come,” the spirit said, “and everywhere  
But here, glad greeting and sweet welcome find :  
Thou, thou alone, to Joy art dead, to Nature blind.

## 3.

“ Behold the vision I unveil to thee,  
And cease thy morbid moanings o’er the past ;  
Think not of what thou might’st have been, but see  
What yet thou mayest live to be at last.  
All men are equal heirs to Nature’s vast  
And wond’rous beauties : they who turn aside  
And heed them not, at every step do cast  
A deeper shadow o’er their lives : they hide [Pride.”  
Their birthright ’neath the falsely glittering wings of

4.

The spirit ceased, and waved her magic wand,  
And straight, as from a cloud, before me rose  
A quiet scene of glen and wooded land :  
All thrills with joy as Spring glides on to loose  
The chains which hold them in cold Winter's throes.  
Earth's drowsy pulse doth beat with prouder swell,  
The birds rejoice amidst the budding boughs,  
The cuckoo's note sounds like some floating bell [dell.  
That chimes soft prelude for the choirs that haunt each

5.

Th' unfettered streams dance blithely o'er the vale,  
And throw soft kisses to the smiling fields ;  
The meads are starred with flowers, which load the gale  
With all the scents their rich luxuriance yields.  
The sun's glad light floods all the earth, and wields,  
With never swerving hand, the broad'ning day ;  
Anon, cool showers fall o'er the throbbing fields,—  
Like tears of joy from heav'n, or wafted spray,—  
And range their humid pearls in glistening array.

## 6.

Fair village maids and wooing youths pass by,  
And pledge their loves before the bright-eyed Spring ;  
Glad groups of children, yet untaught to sigh,  
Disport along the glades, and proudly string  
Fresh flow'rs in beauteous garlands as they sing :  
Frail, aged sires, who've climbed Time's hill so long  
They've reached the spot where snows eternal cling,  
Walk forth, and think they live again among  
Their early joys, untainted by the world's mad throng.

## 7.

The vision faded and my senses woke  
To new delights that chastened all my woe :  
Then o'er my raptured ear, soft murmurs broke  
Of birds, and bees, and lambkins bleating low,  
And in my heart contentment seemed to grow.  
No more I brooded o'er the buried years,  
No more refused what Nature did bestow,  
But wandered forth, and calmed my frenzied fears,  
*And shed, on Nature's balmy breast, repentant tears.*

## CHRISTMAS VISIONS.

---

### I.

“ O weary footed toilers on life’s way !

Look up ! look up, for there is joy again !

Again our Saviour’s birth-star doth display

Its glory, and awhile subdues our pain.

See what bright spirits hover in its train :

Love, Truth, and Charity resplendent rise,

And Hope no longer smiles at us in vain.

Come forth ! O Grief ! and dry thy tear-dimmed eyes !

Come Guilt, and see on what a Christian’s faith relies.”



## 2.

Thus said my heart : but ere the words were dead,  
Strange, mournful voices seemed to throng the air ;  
“ We cannot come ! ” was all the voices said,  
While rose before me visions of despair.  
I saw a woman, pale, with sidelong stare  
Swift threading through the maze of hurrying feet,  
Until, half falt’ring, where the gas light’s glare  
Wrested a breadth of darkness from the street,  
She slipt into the brazen Gin-den’s noise and heat.

## 3.

Quick flits her eye around the noisy room,  
Her heart a-tremble betwixt hope and fear,  
For he she seeks sits lost in drunken gloom,  
Self-prison’d from all things to man most dear,  
And senseless to the love that lingers near.  
He answers her hot tears with oath and threat,  
He turns her back alone into the drear  
Cold night, back to her babes in hunger’s net,  
To weep with them until the Christmas star shall set.

## 4.

And next, a boy's want-shrivelled form was seen,  
Struggling for sleep beside a rich man's door,  
Whence crept fair sounds of joys which ne'er had been  
But sounds to him, for want had served him sore ;  
The ties of kinship he could know no more,  
For she who bore him, urged by drink to stray,  
Left him an outcast on the world's bleak shore.  
Where is she now ? Scarce knowing night from day,  
She burns her womanhood to ashes fast away.

## 5.

O God ! what haggard faces met my gaze !  
Some seemed all blighted by a broken heart ;  
Some called on Death to end their weary days ;  
Some whom Death called, unready to depart,  
Implored him stay his keen unpitying dart.  
Guilt-fettered youth, and dark sin-furrowed age  
Passed by, all writhing 'neath some bitter smart ;  
Not innocence itself escaped the rage  
Of woe I saw, woe which no tears could e'er assuage.

## 6.

Then, as the sun bursts through some sombre cloud,  
There beamed through those sad visions of despair  
The picture of a sober, happy crowd,  
In joyous clusters round an aged pair.  
Mirth lit each face and kept aloof all care,  
While music, alternating song and dance,  
Led on the hours to midnight's hour of pray'r.  
The twelfth stroke died, and all with heavenward glance  
Uprose to sing that now Christ's birth-star did advance.

## 7.

All fled : my soul and I were left alone.  
No longer did I cry, "come, sinners, come!"  
But clearer-eyed by what my dreams had shewn,  
I cried, "O brothers ! look, and be not dumb !  
Leave for awhile the bright and cheerful home :  
Go help the souls who cannot come ; go chase  
The dark drink-demon to his hideous tomb !  
And then, unfettered, and with radiant face, [grace."  
*These* bondaged souls shall come with you to seek Christ's

## W H E R E ?

---

### I.

Bright sun ! O tell me, is there rest

Beyond the purple mountains ?

Fair river ! tell me, is it best

To follow thee into the West,

Or linger by thy fountains ?

### 2.

O moon ! find'st thou sweet rest, while o'er

Thy blue expanse soft gliding ?

Or do the clouds that upward soar,

Or wild-voiced winds that madly roar,

*Prevent rest from abiding ?*

## 3.

Ye birds ! that sing to summer skies,  
No winter ever knowing—  
O tell me where the fair land lies  
Where rest abides ! or have your eyes  
Ne'er seen her white robes glowing ?

## 4.

Sweet star ! amidst those distant spheres,  
Thy subject worlds, revolving--  
O knowest thou where rest adheres ?  
Or are thy kingdoms too in tears,  
Their sorrows past dissolving ?

## 5.

Nor sun, nor star, nor stream can still  
My sorrow by replying :  
Then where—where is there rest ? O will  
It never come to me until  
It greets my eyes in dying ?

## A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

---

### I.

'Twas midnight : sleep had eased my heart awhile  
Of its hard load, and Nature, having set  
The moon upon its night's patrol, did smile  
Herself to sleep, as one who'd no regret.

### 2.

When suddenly, with no prelude of dream,  
Fell full upon the calmness of my sleep,  
A voice, so tender toned I could not deem  
*It flowed from human lips. One word, its deep*

## 3.

Soul-searching music only murmured,—  
That word was mine own name. It came no more ;  
But other voices, voices of the dead,  
Arose. My soul had touched the spirit shore.

## 4.

The present chafed against the past, and all  
The selfishness that cankered in my heart,  
Fell from me like a swift-receding pall.  
Tongue bound, I seemed at once to stand apart

## 5.

Far from to-day. My mother's saintly face,  
The loved one dead, the true and faithful friend,  
I glimpsed again ; nor would my soul retrace  
Its steps, unless their presence might attend

## 6.

Its after journey through this life. I saw  
Old things by better light, and in the new  
Discerned but selfishness, the sordid flaw  
*That taints man's soul and curbs it from the true.*

7.

That unknown voice made conscience spurn aside  
In shame, the actions of to-day, and clutch  
Unto youth's innocence and honest pride  
For safety from the present's burning touch.

8.

The whence or whither of that voice, I ne'er  
May know,—for oft from sources undefined  
Spring purest joys,—but this I know : that where  
Before reigned grief, now lives a peaceful mind.

9.

That voice has taught me, every sin is born  
Of selfishness, and he who lives for greed  
But gluts himself with sin, and is the scorn  
Of all who worship in love's noble creed.



## THE MINSTREL.

---

### I.

Toiling up the hill to Fame,  
    Foothold daily growing firmer,  
Went a youth of humble name,  
    Buoyed up far above the murmur  
    Of the flint-eared, heartless world.

### 2.

Poesy's keen volcanic fire  
    Swayed his soul in self-willed fashion.  
Goaded thus, he seized the lyre,  
    Tried to tune it to his passion,  
    But he only charmed himself.

3.

Still he strummed, and journeyed on ;  
Still the world its ear averted ;  
Still—interpreted by none—  
He and his songs were all deserted,  
Cast adrift to die—or fight !

4.

And the youth chose he would fight,  
Throat-grip the crowd, make men listen ;  
Force the film from off their sight,  
Till their eyes should flash and glisten  
At the dawn of higher life.

5.

So he fought, and lost ; but e'er  
Sang on with a voice unshaken,  
Till he struck a chord so rare,  
That its strangeness made men waken  
To his presence on the hill.

## 6.

Chords more sweet he'd formed before,  
Chords of higher, deeper teaching,  
Chords which Fame had sure passed o'er,  
Had not his music tripped, and screeching  
Broke the spell and charmed the world.

## 7.

Then he topped the hill, and there  
Fame with laurel wreath did meet him,  
Bid him turn from Art, and care  
Alone for Noise, and men would greet him  
As the mouthpiece of their hearts.

## THE UNLOVED.

---

### I.

I'm freighted with woe, and stamped with the foul Devil's  
brand !

For Beauty and Grace share no part of my face ;  
'Tis ugly ! but O ! 'neath the surface doth glow  
A passionate blood, and Love turns away from my hand.

### 2.

'Tis weary to watch for him who refuses to come !  
To stand on Life's shore, looking vainly before  
For the bright ship of Hope to cast out the rope,  
And land you at last where Love for young hearts finds a  
home.

## 3.

I throw out my bait ; but swift it recoils on my soul  
With dagger-like blow ; and my heart then doth know  
That the chink of my gold will not make Love more  
bold,  
Yet brings to my feet the base and the false in a shoal.

## 4.

Get hence with your vows ! they're false as your serpent-  
like tongues !  
Let Truth take your place, though it bring me disgrace !  
You lie, when you say that I'm fair as the day,  
Your sin-speckled souls reflect but the blackest of  
wrongs !

## 5.

O ! often I bare my breast to the chilly night air,  
And cool my hot heart in its breath, till the smart  
Awakens despair : then I throw loose my hair,  
And turn to the stars, and send up to Heaven this mad  
prayer :

6.

“O God ! let this end ! and out of my form shut thy  
breath ;

Or mould me anew, make me fair as I'm true ;


Or else let me hide where the worm crawls with pride  
Through tenantless heads ; and send as my bridegroom,  
King Death !

## WAITING FOR THE SWALLOWS.

---

### I.

When the swallows fled to the sultry south  
And the leaves pined away and died ;  
When my heart gave words to my quivering mouth  
My tongue could not utter for pride ;  
Twas then, O then ! that he wandered away,  
And he never can hear what my heart would say  
Until he comes back with the swallows !



2.

Though the snow has gone, the branches are bare,  
    Though each day brings a joy for some :  
Yet branches must bud, and look green in the air  
    Ere the day of my joy will come ;  
    But then, O then ! though 'tis weary to wait,  
    And Time seems a laggard, he's never too late,  
    But comes when he's due with the swallows !

3.

When the spring peeps in at our cottage door,  
    And the common birds try to sing,  
I shall watch for the cloud whose fleecy core  
    Will be specked with many a wing ;  
    And then, O then ! I shall know there is rest,  
    For my soul will have done its earthly behest,  
    And he will be here with the swallows.



## 4.

Though both wind and wave rage wild on the sea,  
When they glimpse his ship's steady sail,  
And they see the birds flying around it in glee,  
Their breath will drop to a soothing gale ;  
And then, mother, then ! you need watch me no more,  
For Death's gaunt shadow but waits at the door,  
Until he has come with the swallows !

## 5.

Then he'll need no words to tell how I love,  
We shall kiss, and our souls will embrace ;  
And the angels will come and bear me above  
With the bloom of his lips on my face ;  
And then, O then ! I shall sleep time away  
Till he comes with fresh kiss to wake me and say  
He's ta'en his farewell of the swallows !

## THE RIVER.

---

### I.

I stand by a murmurous river  
That sings on its way to the sea ;  
That sings a passionate story  
Of things that are known but to me.

### 2.

And oft on its banks I wander,  
And list to its tuneful voice,  
For amidst its wail of sorrow  
My soul gains strength to rejoice.

3.

Through fields and gardens it windeth,  
It stoppeth nor night nor day,  
And the self same song it singeth  
Whenever I pass its way.

4.

It sings of my happy childhood,  
Ere Care swooped down on my life ;  
It renews the pleasant fancies  
That once in my heart were rife.

5.

When the world looked like a heaven,  
When I placed firm trust in man,  
When no voice was a voice of sadness  
And life seemed more than a span.

6.

When sitting here in the sunset  
Till the last red streak had died,  
I thought I should breathe for ever  
In the glow of that youthful pride.

7.

It sings a dirge o'er the sweetness  
That fled with those happy days,  
And brings to my mind a glory  
Which time can never efface.

8.

A glory whose brightness bred sorrow,  
Whose light still steadily beams,  
And throwing all else into shadow,  
Like a star in the dark it seems.

9.

Of this is the river singing  
As it runs o'er miles untold,  
And bears far over the ocean  
The tale which can never grow old.

10.

The cuckoo may come, and the linnet  
May fill the air with his song ;  
The wind may sigh o'er the corn field  
As the shadows go floating along ;

## 11.

Yet the river sings far above them,  
For it sings the song of my heart,  
And while other music is changing  
It ever keeps true to its part.

## 12.

'Twas here that we walked in the gloaming,  
The light of my life and I !  
'Twas here that the vows were whispered  
Which memory can never let die.

## 13.

But my tongue shall never upbraid her,  
Shall ne'er call her false, or untrue ;  
'Twas enough to see and to love her,  
Too much to be loved by her too.

## 14.

The radiance left by her presence  
Throws a halo over my soul ;  
And the voice that thrilled with its music  
I still hear in the river's roll.

15.

Thus the river sings of my sorrow,

Thus it sings of my former joy ;

And the sorrow becomes so holy

It ceases my soul to annoy.

16.

From its nest far under the mountain

Till it sinks on the breast of the sea,

The river keeps up its singing

Through glen, through wood, and through lea.

17.

Through fields and gardens it windeth,

It stoppeth nor night nor day,

And the selfsame song it singeth

Whenever I pass its way.

## ON A LADY'S PORTRAIT.

---

O where in this face can I trace  
The sign of the soul within?  
Does nought remain of mark or stain  
To tell of thy nameless sin?

Ah no ! those eyes look too clear for lies,  
Those lips too sweet to betray ;  
Yet a wanton's smiles, and a wanton's guiles  
Their every move do sway.

Thy golden hair is but a snare,  
Thy cheek's tint sin's own dye,  
Thy winning glance is a poisoned lance  
None feel but live on to sigh.

And never, I ween, has thy soul been seen  
In nakedness but by me,  
And I would the day had been far away  
That shewed me its falsity.



# ALONE !

---

## I.

In the twilight sat a maiden  
    Weeping o'er a churchyard stone,  
As the shadows slowly deepened  
    And the wind made dreary moan ;  
And the maiden bent in sorrow,  
    Cried aloud in bitter tone,  
“ Here my hopes of love lie shattered ;  
    In the world I'm left alone !  
        In the world I'm left alone ! ”

2.

Slow the twilight grew to darkness,  
And the night bird shrill did cry ;  
White the town gleamed in the distance,  
As the stars o'erspread the sky ;  
Still the maiden sat there weeping,  
Weeping o'er the cold grey stone,  
“ Holy angels take my spirit,  
In the world I'm left alone !  
In the world I'm left alone ! ”

3.

“ O, 'twas bitter thus to part us,  
Just when dawned love's blissful day ;  
Just when gaining all we'd lived for,  
Thus to dash us with dismay.  
Take my soul to join its mate then,  
From my death-bed on this stone,  
Take me from this world of terror,  
Do not leave me here alone !  
Do not leave me here alone ! ”

## 4.

Slow the hours crept on to midnight,

Then from midnight unto day :

Day discovered Death regretting

O'er two souls he'd stolen away.

'Midst dank grass and leaves new fallen,

Close beside the dull cold stone,

In the night the maid had parted

From this world to her so lone !

From this world to her so lone !

## ON THE STREAM.

---

Through the waning sunlight gliding,  
All our thoughts from earth dividing,  
    Slow we drifted down the stream ;  
The world of man lay calm before us,  
Far removed, yet breathing chorus  
    To our souls' sweet music-dream.

Autumn leaves fell like Narcissus  
To their shadows, and with kisses  
    Met and died upon the stream ;  
Distant oars were dipping, dipping,  
And into the silence slipping,  
    Mingled with our waking dream.

Eye to eye deep love was speaking,  
Vain the tongue its utterance seeking,  
As we drifted down the stream ;  
O to sail thus through the sunset  
Into heaven, and so at once set  
Before God our souls' sweet dream !

Stars that filled my heaven of beauty  
Were thine eyes,—their only duty  
To give life the gloss of dream ;  
Their brightness all the past obscuring,  
Seemed to gild and give enduring  
To our dreaming on the stream.

All my life is but in seeming  
An after-glow of that night's dreaming,—  
Heavenly dreaming on the stream ;  
Never more the world's pollution  
Can deface by hard intrusion  
The remembrance of that dream.

Wheresoe'er stern Fate may guide us,

Howsoe'er apart divide us,

On this life's uncertain stream ;

No rude blast our souls shall sever,

Love shall keep them ling'ring ever

In the radiance of that dream.

## TO GERTRUDE.

---

### I.

What though the world look stern and cold,  
Or greet us with a smile ;  
Though care oppress, or joy unfold  
Her gauzy wings awhile ;  
Still shall we two with hearts entwined,  
In peace and love live blest ;  
Both sharers of one common mind,  
Both with one thought possessed.

2.

New kings may rise, old empires fall,  
The years may come and go ;  
And death beneath his ghastly pall  
May hide both friend and foe ;  
Still shall our love,—bliss dashed with pain—  
Rest true amidst all change ;  
And face at last death's boundless main,  
Nor fear the vision strange.

3.

Our paths in life may oft divide,  
The sea may roll between ;  
To other eyes our looks may hide  
What both our hearts may mean.  
Earth-life's too short for love like this,  
Love is too sweet to die ;  
So it shall yield eternal bliss  
In life beyond the sky.



# PSYCHE AND EROS.

A FRAGMENT.



\* \* \* \* \*

Then, Music, trembling, drops  
Its mellow breath and into silence swoons :  
And, rising from the lull, the pair ascend  
The silken dais, over which there hangs  
A lofty canopy whose sweeping folds  
And dazzling rainbow hues full contrast give  
*Unto* the snowy garments of the bride.

How sweet !

How heavenly sweet she seems ! her skin is fairer  
Than is the tinted hollow of a shell  
For ages washed and beautiful in deep  
Cavernous seas ; her tresses, flashing like  
Thin flossy threads of molten gold, loose flow  
From out the diamonded wreath that spans  
Her open brow ; her eye, expanded by  
The foregone sorrow of her heart, reflects  
The purest blue of inmost heaven, while on it  
Slow floats a timid, joy-pearled tear, so loth  
To quit its lucent resting place, it clings  
And clings unto the fringed lid until  
It drops to death. A golden zone clear marks  
The circuit of her waist ; her fluttering robes,  
Slight spun as gossamer, full plain betray  
The undulations of her perfect form :  
And silken sandals her fair feet enclose.  
O say, how shall I symbolize her beauty ?

How totalise what senses cannot grasp ?  
To do that were to measure heaven with earth  
Compare the unseen with the visible,  
Make real the ideal. Then say that she's  
A rose leaf by a rain-drop jewelled ; or,  
A sunbeam smiling on a dying show'r ;  
Or butterfly uprising fair before  
The blushing morn, and warming in the sun  
Its dew bemoistened wing ; or say, in short,  
'Tis sweetness very self made sweeter still  
By Melancholy's blanchèd breath. And he,  
The son of Aphrodite and of Mars,  
The blended imprint of them both, looks down  
Into his Psyche's eyes and cools therein  
The eager passion of his own. His bright  
Apparel and celestial form bespeak  
The god of love, e'en through his vaunted bow  
And quiver have been laid aside.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now each eye in sacred awe upturns  
To Zeus descending slow upon his cloud  
Enthronèd car, his silent wingèd train  
All hovering in their solemn beauty like  
A halo round his king-like head. The car  
Rests high above the throng obeisant  
That fills each arcade, porch and fretted niche  
Below ; and, mute with majesty, the god  
Serene surveys them all. Anon, his loud,  
Deep resonant organ voice breaks o'er the hush,  
And rolls through every silent space uncurbed.  
“ O ye divinities ! ” the god began,  
“ Who yield to me my vast supremacy !  
Ye stern upholders of my rightful might  
Through foul and jealous eyed rebellion !  
Immortals who for thrice have trampled out  
Fierce smouldering heaps of black conspiracy !  
Join in these sacred rites, and bury here,  
Before this holy altar. all low spites

And enmities ; take peace into your hearts,  
That ye thereby a purer homage pay  
To this blest pair and me : renew once more,  
While listening to their whispered vows, your pledge  
Of unity, and so give longer term  
Of joy and sweet security unto  
This sceptre's pow'rful sway." And now Zeus ceased,  
And Eros, passion flushed, yet reverent,  
Turns to the god, still holding Psyche's hand,  
All trembling, as if fearing yet some shade  
Of love might slip if left unguarded. "O !  
Sovran Zeus! Imperial ruler of  
Our varied destinies ! Dread deity  
Of deities ! bless us, thy subjects, who  
In seeking marriage seek to honour thee.  
Our several pathways shall commingle here  
In one ; and O ! do thou safe guide us through  
The storms of coming years ; and if, perchance,  
Some unseen store of pain or grief Time holds  
For us undealt, I pray thee, let not what

Light weight serves but to press one little tear  
From tenderest heart, fall upon her ; but let  
Me, taking all upon my stronger self,  
Shield her from every harsh mischance." This said,  
He turns, and rests eyes, thoughts and soul upon  
His bride again ; scarce hears the murmurous sounds  
Of high approval swelling on the air ;  
But so stands, rapt in adoration, till  
Great Zeus prompteth his seraphs to their task.  
The trumpets sound a chorale up to heaven,  
And heaven, through Echo, gives them clear reply.

\* \* \* \* \*

## AT MY MOTHER'S GRAVE.

---

### I.

The twilight mingles with the golden west,

The wooded slopes in heavy shadow lie,

Bird-music sinks into a blissful rest,

The sunlight dies along the silent sky,

And all around is solemn as thy grave.

O mother ! all the world seems yet to sigh

That thou wert rudely swept beneath Death's wave.

2.

Ten years full measured with the pangs of life  
Have drawled their weary length since thou did'st die !  
Ten years of foundering hopes and useless strife !  
Thy living love did ever keep me high  
Above the waves of the all-selfish world ;  
But Death's cold glamour o'er thee fell, and I  
Was far into life's heartless tempest hurled.

3.

Yet now I live with thee again a space ;  
I hear thy voice,—by sadness made more sweet,—  
And look again into thy gentle face.  
Pride and Ambition leave me at thy feet ;  
The mysteries that hang around the soul  
Seem clearer ; and my tortured heart doth beat  
With calmer swell, subdued to thy control.



## 4.

Though Care's dark shadow lies across my path,  
There still is sunshine in my memory.  
How oft in far-off scenes that sunshine hath  
Burst forth, and melted passion to a sigh !  
A passing voice, or distant music tone  
Oft hath sufficed to bring thy presence nigh,  
And spread thy spirit's radiance o'er my own.

## 5.

With spirit-music all the world seems filled,  
Our memories feed and grow upon its sound ;  
We catch its cadence, and by it are thrilled  
Where'er its raptured melody is found.  
Yon rook which caws about the belfry there,  
Instils more heaven into my soul as round  
It flies, than I could reap from many a prayer.

6.

Its caw, though harsh and shrill, re-brings the time  
    When thou and I together trod this place ;  
When, listening to the bells' devotional chime,  
    We entered here full-souled with hope and grace ;  
And so, yon rook gives music to my heart  
    While sweeter sounds pass by and leave no trace,  
For of our past no voice do they impart.

7.

I'd weep for thee if there were need to weep,—  
    Only man's selfishness weeps o'er the dead.  
How many would be glad with thee to sleep,  
    Even could Death but give them this cold bed ;  
How many more would gladly join thee here  
    Could they but win thy holy calm, instead  
Of tossing on the waves of endless fear.

## 8.

Death hath few terrors for the joyless breast ;  
Life is half death where Sorrow constant stays ;  
So, nearer Death and nearer God, some rest  
Were gained did not Despair come o'er our days.  
O patience ! did'st thou but on Sorrow wait,  
Her ways would holier be than joyous ways,  
And Sorrow would be life's most noble state.

## 9.

O Mother ! though thou'rt dead, thou sayest more  
To me than all surviving voices say.  
'Tis thee alone I think of as of yore.  
The village haunts where once I used to play,  
The village youths whom once I deemed so true,  
All seem but rude distortions of a day  
When thou wert brightest object of my view.

10.

To-morrow will recall me far away,

But find me purer for my lingering here ;

Amidst these youthful scenes I could not stay,

For all the light is fled which made them dear.

Then, mother ! rest thee in thy perfect sleep.

The storms which make our earthly life so drear

Can nevermore disturb thy slumber deep.

## THE FACTORY.

---

I.

Grim and gaunt, smoke dappled and bare,  
The mill stands black in the murky air ;  
    And the passer by  
    Looks up with a sigh,  
And thinks how weary it is to be there !  
    But what knows he  
    How blithe we be ?  
    The smoke clouds float  
    Round the chimney's throat,

And sullenly hang on his sight ;  
And he thinks, no doubt,  
'Tis so black without  
That within there are terrors too deep for the light.  
Thus an inward view  
We mortals draw  
From the outward hue,  
And think in our hearts our judgment true  
To wisdom's law.

2.

To me the mill is a thing that lives,  
And from its black heart true sunshine gives ;  
From morn to night  
It spreadeth delight,  
For it grindeth the people's bread.  
O passer by !  
If you knew much as I,  
No more would you think it a place of dread,  
No more salute its face with a sigh.

## 3.

What a clash, what a roar  
Through its walls outpour !  
And, eager to add to the toilers' store,  
How it writhes, how it groans,  
How it pants, how it moans,  
The thunder inblent with its hundred tones !  
Each quivering wheel  
Doth a power reveal  
To make man work, and think, and feel ;  
And amidst all the din  
A music breaks in,  
Which sings of the joys we are working to win.

## 4.

What a void it fills !  
What pain it kills !  
What eyes it makes proof against tears !  
For its hum  
Maketh dumb

The voices which come  
From the graves of the buried years.

No wail of the past  
E'er spoileth its melodie,  
As loud and fast  
It sings of the joys that be ;  
Of glories bright  
And added might  
Which the future days shall see.

5.

The faster it whirls the sweeter it sings,  
And sorrow and care from the toiler flings,  
For "Forward !" it cries,  
"Our path onward lies,  
There is much to be done ere we win life's prize ;  
Still toiling away  
With hearts light and gay,—  
While the idler deep in gloominess sits,  
While the idler eyes each shadow that flits,—



We rise o'er the strife  
And the sorrows of life,  
And learn the true secret of pleasure—  
That happiness flies  
Not in golden guise—  
The handmaid of helpless leisure ;  
That high birth, nor pelf  
Can e'er for itself  
Lay claim to the glorious treasure.  
To the rich man's door  
It cometh no more  
Than it comes to those who are ragged and poor.  
'Tis work, 'tis work, that happiness brings,  
That lifeth the poor to the level of kings ;  
And where, O where, can its presence be found,  
If not in the mill's unceasing round ?

## 6.

Hark ! what wondrous appeals  
Clang out from the wheels !

And I listen so long  
That many a song  
Through the whirr and the clash out steals.  
Then take one or two,  
They may serve you to strew  
'Mongst the loftier themes that are sung to you.

THE WEAVER'S SONG.

---

I weave the prologue to many a story,  
And in fancy oft weave to its end ;  
For 'tis pleasant to think that some after-glory  
On my warp and my weft will attend :  
'Tis pleasant to think that one's hands may have aided  
To vivify beauty or lengthen its charm ;

To bring the old light to the cheek that is faded

The fears of adorers awhile to disarm.

So from morn to eve,

I weave, I weave.

This piece which the Steam-god and I are weaving,

O where will it be in the after-years?

Will it rise and fall with a breast that is grieving

For a love that can ne'er be recalled by her tears?

Or shall it adorn a fair bride at the altar,

With its trailing pattern of lilies entwined?

Shall it soften the blushes which make her falter

As in maidenhood dead the wife is divined?

So from morn to eve,

I weave, I weave.

Perchance some princess, or high-born lady

May don it for scenes of courtly state ;

Or a lord secreted in bower shady

May wrap in its folds his trembling mate ;

Or, perhaps, some soldier slowly dying  
    'Neath the cold-eyed stars on a distant shore,  
May make it his shroud as his soul goes flying  
    Where the noise of battle can reach him no more.  
        So from morn to eve,  
        I weave, I weave.

There will none of them think of a lass so lowly  
    As the lass who is weaving here day by day ;  
And yet there is one who thinks her as holy,  
    As good and as true as ever were they ;  
A dear, dear lad, who loves all my fancies,  
    Who walks with me home when the day's work is done,  
Who whispers a tale that o'ertops my romances,  
    And makes a sweet end of days sweetly begun.  
        So from morn to eve,  
        I weave, I weave.

THE SHORT TIMER'S SONG.  

---

I'm too little, you think,  
To move about here,  
'Midst the constant clink  
Of the whirling gear.

But at home there are little ones less than I,  
Sweet little darlings who often would cry,  
Did they want the bread that my wages will buy.

No father have we,  
Our mother lies ill,  
And in hunger we'd be,  
Were it not for the mill ;  
But the mill, the mill keepeth hunger away,  
It giveth me schooling for half of the day,  
And giveth me joys that I ne'er found in play.

My work is to spin,  
But when bigger grown  
To weave I'll begin,  
And more money own ;  
Then my mother shall want nor biscuits nor wine,  
My brothers shall dress in cloth rich and fine,  
And all with the wages the mill shall make mine.

What a joy 'tis to feel  
Little hands like these  
Some sorrow can heal,  
Some hunger appease ;  
And the thought of it all doth make me so glad  
I think I can never again be sad  
So long as I've health and work can be had.

THE ENGINE TENTER'S SONG.

---

'Tis blithe by the roaring fires to breathe,  
To hear the engines ring,  
Or watch the smoke clouds while a wreath  
Round the factory tower they fling.  
'Tis blithe to think what a power I guide,  
What hands are swayed by mine,  
To feel the glow of a vigorous pride  
As I stand in the firelight's shine.

You talk of faces seen in the fire,  
As at home you lonely sit,  
But these wild flames shew me something higher  
In the glow which they emit.  
They shew me a power that moves the earth,  
Before which the nations bow,

A power, methinks, far greater in worth  
Than all else the world can shew.

Then roar, fires, roar ! your music outpour !  
For Commerce in you outspeaks :  
Her voice must be heard the wide world o'er  
Ere a perfect sunshine breaks :  
But day by day your tongues shall rise higher  
Till wrong and tyranny cease ;  
Till all can see in the roaring fire  
The symbol of earthly peace.

THE WATCHMAN'S SONG.

---

When the mill is all hushed and the steam-god is sleeping,  
When the toilers to rest have gone,  
When the slow wave of silence around us is creeping,  
And the Night her star-jewels doth don,



Tis then that I go on my nightly round,  
Tis then that the mill never utters a sound.  
And o'er it safe watch I am keeping,

All seasons, all weathers, my watch is unceasing,  
But the night it never seems drear,  
For it sheweth delights that to me are more pleasing  
Than those that with day do appear :  
At night I can walk with nature alone,  
Can learn all her joys, and hear every tone  
Be it angry, wild, or appeasing.

In the spring, when the virgin flow'rs are upspringing,  
The night air is filled with their scent,  
Which the breeze from the far-off meadows is bringing  
Till my heart overflows with content,  
Till it seems the silence itself bringeth near  
Sweet scenes which the day and its smoke make  
appear  
As far in the distance clinging.

On a wild summer night, alone with the thunder,  
Till its last smothered growl is spent,  
While the lightning's flash seems to cleave asunder  
The chimney in many a rent,  
I gaze and think of my boy out at sea,  
And pray the good God his watcher to be,  
My heart all a-tremble with wonder.

When the full autumn moon in splendour is shining,  
I watch till it sinks out of sight,  
And I see the grey dawn with the sunlight combining  
To rouse the world and chase away night :  
And I see the sun shake the mist from the hills,  
And the growing patter of feet soon kills  
The peace on which night was reclining.

When the winter snow-flakes around me are flying,  
A holy repose my heart fills,  
And I see the snow on the mill top lying  
As calm as it rests on the hills ;

But the mill starts up with the rising sun,  
And the snow like a frightened child doth run,  
And in terror soon is dying.

So a watchman's life is a life of pleasure,  
A life of tranquil delight,  
He learns all the beauties of Nature to treasure,  
As he roams through the silent night.  
He rests through the noise of the restless day,  
And, while the toilers are working away,  
Of sleep he taketh his measure.

## DIALECT SONG.

---

Come Bessy, my lass, an' I'll sing thee a song,  
While tha darns them owd stockins o' mine ;  
Dick's snoozin' i' t'cot, but he'll noan lig so long,  
So here goes 'fore he kicks up a shine.  
Some bards sing i' t' praise o' beauty an' birth,  
An' there's others sing t' praises o' wine ;  
Wine, beauty, an' birth will not equal i' worth  
The charms, my dear Bess, which are thine.

Tha's a nice crop o' hair, just rusted wi' care—  
There are some vulgar fowk call it red—  
Thy little plump cheeks are a brahn speckled pair,  
An' thy een are a grey, it is said.  
What matters if beauty's at fault i' some place  
If virtue is found in its stead?  
For, it's knawn, a fine face oft meets wi' disgrace  
Where a fahl un may go withaht dread.

For cuttin' a frock, or for makkin' a pie,  
Or i' stretchin' two shillin' to three,  
For readin' a knave, or disarnin' a lie,  
There are few women, Bess, equal thee.  
I knaw tha'rt a stranger to envy an' pride,  
An' thy heart's as kind as can be,  
So, content I'll abide, wi' thee by my side,  
An' bless t' day that Fate gave tha to me.

## SONNETS.



I.

Methought I stood upon a lofty peak,  
And thence beheld a gorgeous realm, as bright  
As visioned heaven ; its breath of soft delight,  
Its chequered loveliness of grove and creek,  
Of vale and sweet-voiced stream, did gently break  
Upon my young untravelled soul ; till sight,  
Confused in the ecstatic maze of light,  
Drew joy-pearled tears adown my glowing cheek.  
And then a holy music filled the sky,  
And giant bards that erst had shook the vast  
Extent of earth with song sublime, moved past  
Chanting their glorious melodies on high.  
Abashed, my own weak song I could not sing,  
But satisfied my fervent soul by listening.



## II.

## NIGHTFALL.

The regal sun sinks on his western bed,

And leaves behind a glow of glorious light,

A bright memento of the day just dead.

Then, like a mighty fallen cloud, grim Night,  
Emerging from his cave forlorn bedight

In dusky robes, the face of heaven slow blinds,  
And blocks, with stealthy tread, the fount of light.

Then Silence comes with peace to musing minds,  
And Day's dull drone to breathings low subsides ;

Then Solitude her soothing charm unbinds  
In stony streets where Commerce daily bides ;

Then Sleep doth free the toilers' weary breast  
Awhile from gnawing care, and Nature hides

In darkness all the dreary day's unrest.

## III.

TO FRANCES.

WITH A LOCKET.

Here, in this tiny casket, is contained

The sun-print of a form which loves thee well ;

Would that it were some amulet or spell,

At sight whereof all sorrow were restrained

From nearing thee ! And yet some potent power

(If wanting this) will ever there remain ;

The power to summon to each present hour,

The memory of those love-bright hours we fain

Had ever kept from falling to the past.

Then to thy neck let it have anchorage fast,

So that thy bosom's gentle wave shall ne'er

Be heaved to future rise or fall, and bear

Not this love-gift upon its snowy crest,—

No, not till Time shall lead thee to eternal rest.

## IV.

A star came out, and all the world up-gazed,  
As Science told the tale of its long travel.  
Time dwelt alone with God, 'twas said, when blazed  
That star's first ray, nor was there man to unravel  
The wonders that in after time he saw.  
And yet, that birth ray flying on o'er space  
Through all the myriad years, but met man's gaze  
To-day. And lo ! while people looked in awe,  
The star did vanish, and nor sign nor speck  
Was left to tell its splendour or its wreck.  
It came and went, the glory of a day ;  
And man ne'er tires of telling its strange story.  
So, joys that come and swiftly pass away,  
We treasure more than many a brighter living glory.

## V.

When all we've lived for comes to us at last,  
And proves as transient as things gone before,  
The soul goes drifting with it to the past,  
And thinks its joys are gone for evermore.  
Hope mortal dies, immortal hope appears,  
Pointing to glories that come after death ;  
And then the soul looks back from out its tears,  
Throws off despair, and tastes a purer breath,  
Discerns a higher world till then unknown,  
And learns that life is not for earth alone.  
Then comes the chaste and holy time of peace,  
When joy and sorrow all their warring cease,  
Each melts in each, and thus in temperate glow,  
The soul lives on unconscious of life's woe.

## VI.

## TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN KEATS

O Keats ! when thy poetic star's glad rays  
First pierced my mind's dull cavern mouth, I felt  
Like some wrecked sailor on his raft low knelt,  
Who glimpses, with the rising sun's first blaze,  
The wide expanse specked with a sail's white face.  
When grief hath swathed me in its misty belt,  
I oft have turned unto thy book, and dwelt  
Awhile within thy rich domain, whose ways  
Bloom thick with flowers of antique Grecian song,  
Transplanted by thy pen to English ground.  
Too ripe for earth, God placed thee high among  
The bards of Heaven, that Homer might resound  
Thy praises to more willing ears than deigned  
To listen here ; and now earth mourns what Heaven then  
gained.

## VII.

## DAYBREAK.

The grey-faced Dawn with slow and stealthy stride  
Comes on, and flings Day's portals open wide.  
There Time, as sentinel, doth ever stand,  
    Counting the dying hours as they are cast  
    Adown the yawning gulf men call "the Past."  
The Dawn recedes, and lo ! the Sun, the grand  
    Majestic King of Day, comes forth, and Night  
    Recoils, and unto far-off lands takes flight.  
Then flits a tremor through the sleeping world,  
    And all the east with splendour is o'erspread :  
The clouds, like fairy skiffs with sails unfurled,  
    Off from the dull horizon's shore are led ;  
    And all fantastic in their forms, they thread  
    The boundless main which rolleth overhead.

VIII.

AFTER A STORM.

God whispers "peace!" at last : and one bold star  
 Steals out to watch the wind furl close its wings ;  
 Then calls its fellows forth, till all the far  
 Spread dome of heaven throbs with their glimmerings.  
 Then Silence wraps her arms around the Night,  
 And lulls the mighty world to airy sleep ;  
 And save its breathing through the softened light,  
 Calm pulsing through the air, like to the deep  
 And holy music of God's voice, no sound  
 Disturbs the honey'd dumbness of the scene :  
 The wide earth seemeth without verge or bound,  
 As if nor Life nor Space were bar between  
 The sinful world where man must mourn and die,  
 And the bright vastness of eternity.

## IX.

O must I never tread those lands unseen  
My spirit hath so often trod in dream ?  
Ne'er breathe the mellow air where breathed serene  
Those antique bards whose deep-toned music stream  
Shall for all time flow on in silvery gleam ?  
O must I never roam those dream-lands o'er  
Where Keats and Shelley their last songs did pour,  
And whence God called them to his choir supreme ?  
Sweet Venice. Florence, Naples, and proud Rome,  
Are names which rise amidst the joys of home,  
Names that call up the bright imaginings  
Which o'er that classic clime my fancy flings ;  
And O what joys were mine could I but steep  
My soul in glories which those lands safe keep !



## X.

Blue skies, soft leafy woods, fair winding streams,  
Brown moorlands empty to the silent sky,  
Deep sunken glens inlaid with sunny gleams,  
Are pleasures which enrapture every eye :  
But these, though holier far than human things,  
Can never sink in memory so deep  
As those sweet feelings which a fair face brings  
Where love and beauty a bright radiance keep.  
Soft love-fraught eyes, and hot, impassioned tones,  
Are last of all that lingering memory owns ;  
Nor death, nor time, nor falsehood can efface  
The earnest look of love, nor can they chase  
Away the heavenly music of a voice  
Whose soul-borne tones once made the heart rejoice.

## XI.

## WHITE SHADOWS.

Dark shadows throng the sunlight of man's days,  
And sorrow never wholly leaves his side :  
Though fortune lead him through the brightest ways  
Some memories still will come to dash his pride ;  
And pride once bent ne'er stands erect again,  
Its after-glories are all blent with pain.  
How oft, when basking in some sunny gleam,  
A foregone sorrow casts a darksome beam  
Across our souls ; whereon in smiles we deck  
The painful heart-wound which can never heal.  
But the fell shadows which bring total wreck  
Are those which in the guise of glories steal,—  
White shadows which eternal pleasures seem  
Till Truth unmasks them and lets all their horrors  
stream.

## XII.

## MY 'SCUTCHEON.

My 'scutcheon, though unseen of mortal eyes  
Is sweeter far for me to contemplate  
Than all the heraldries of uncouth guise  
That e'er were blazoned on a lordly gate.  
My 'scutcheon has not borne a haughty face  
Through centuries of surging joy and pain,  
Yet proud am I my lineage to trace  
Thereby, for it hath known nor blot nor stain.  
High on heaven's gate its glories are enshrined,  
And thence for ever shine upon my mind :  
Its sweet device a mother's face doth bear,  
And Love and Truth are garlands it doth wear.  
Then, boast who will his long ancestral line,  
His 'scutcheon can no nobler be than mine.

## XIII.

## WRITTEN ON MY BIRTHDAY.

Another landmark of old Time I reach,  
     And I survey the chequered retrospect ;  
 And, angered by its gloominess, impeach  
     Sweet Hope with falsehood, trifling and neglect ;  
 Recall the joys it promised should be mine,  
     The longings which I deemed would rise to truth  
 Ere yet this decade could so far decline  
     As to stamp manhood on the brow of youth.  
 But mine's the fault, not Hope's. With Hope not nigh  
     My poor achievements would have been far less,  
 And little as I've climbed I'd climbed less high.  
     Then, Hope, e'en if thy smile bring not success,  
 Smile on, there still is much for life to gain,  
 For though I win not all, I win decrease of pain.

## XIV.

## L' ENVOI.

This little bark which now I cast adrift  
To toss upon the sea 'midst mightier craft  
Goes sail-swayed with my hope's half faltering waft,  
And laden with my love's most treasured gift.  
Unskilled to guide, I leave the restless tide  
To bear it o'er its many hidden ways,  
To face the critic-gods, who shall decide  
Its meed of cloud or sunshine, scorn or praise.  
Breathless I stand and watch it from the shore  
Till wafted all too far for its recall :  
Breathless I listen for the words to fall  
From lips of men returning from the roar,  
For words which of my bark shall tidings bear,  
And tell me what shall be its future fare.

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